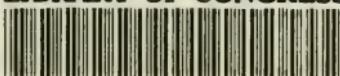


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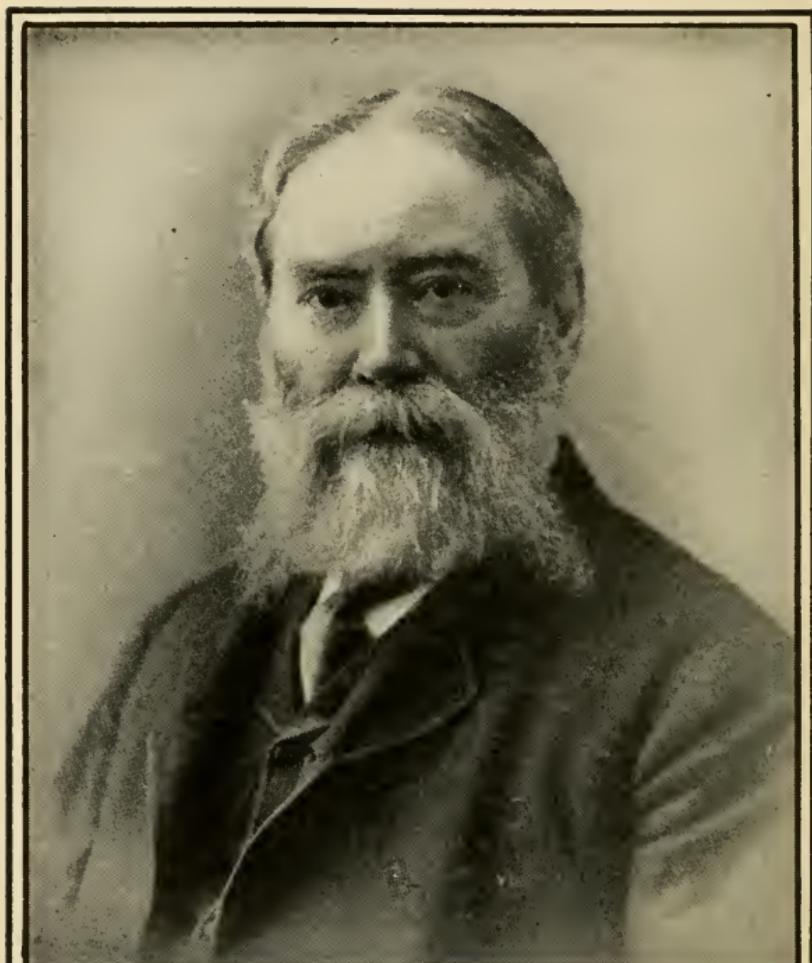












JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Merrill's English Texts

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THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

By JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

THE COURTSHIP OF  
MILES STANDISH

By HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

S N O W - B O U N D

By JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND  
NOTES BY CHARLES ROBERT GASTON  
PH.D., INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH, RICHMOND  
HILL HIGH SCHOOL, NEW YORK CITY



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*In memory of*

GEORGE R. CARPENTER

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CRITIC OF AMERICAN LITERATURE,  
THE MAN OF BROAD  
SYMPATHIES

## Merrill's English Texts

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## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION:

Life of Lowell . . . . .	9
Life of Longfellow . . . . .	14
Life of Whittier . . . . .	22

### POEMS:

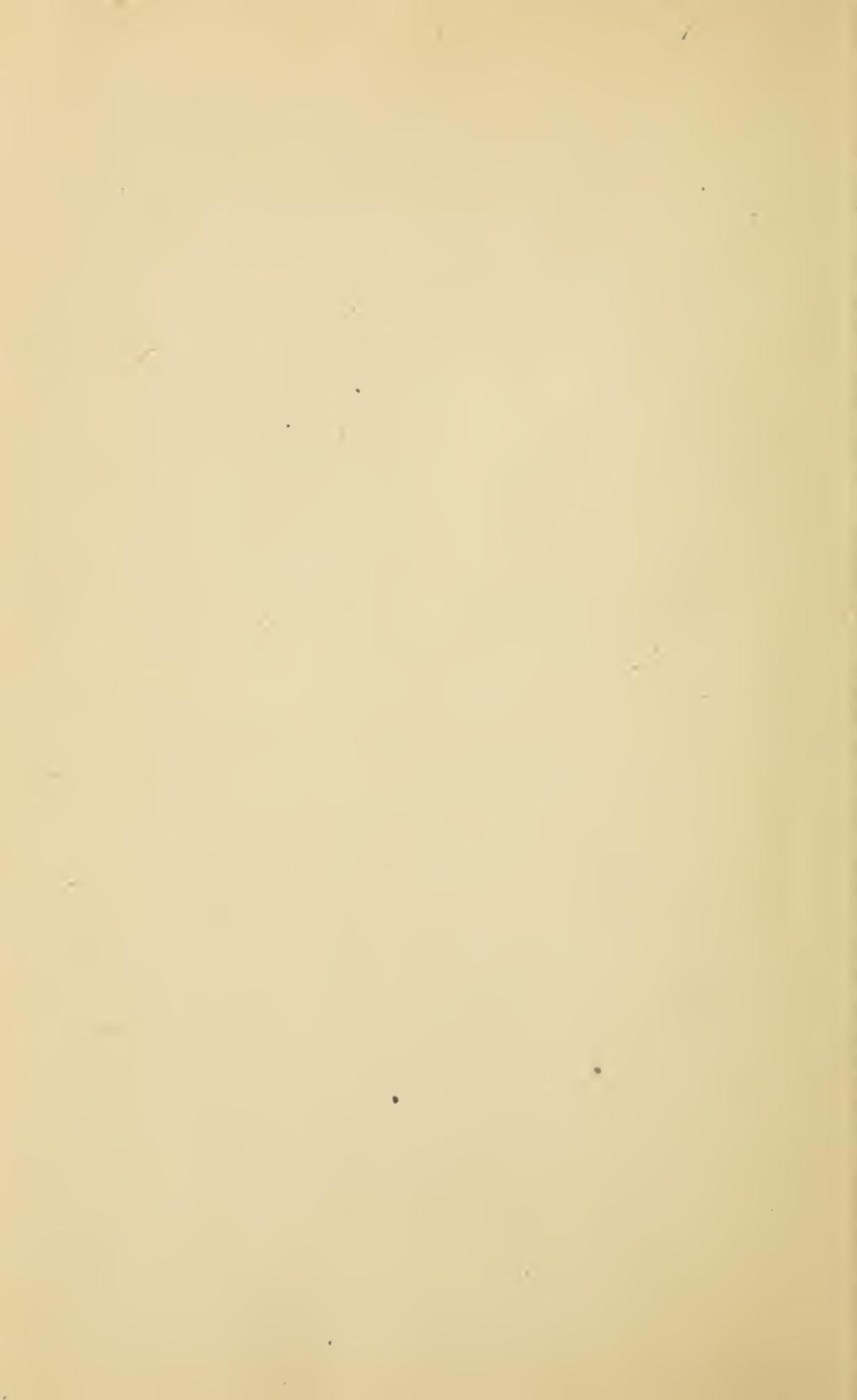
The Vision of Sir Launfal . . . . .	29
The Courtship of Miles Standish . . . . .	47
Snow-Bound . . . . .	129

### NOTES:

The Vision of Sir Launfal . . . . .	161
The Courtship of Miles Standish . . . . .	166
Snow-Bound . . . . .	179

### EXAMINATION QUESTIONS:

The Vision of Sir Launfal . . . . .	193
The Courtship of Miles Standish . . . . .	194
Snow-Bound . . . . .	195



## INTRODUCTION

### LIFE OF LOWELL, 1819-1891

THE writer of the biography of James Russell Lowell in the *American Men of Letters* series rightly speaks of 1848 as the “*Annus Mirabilis*” or wonderful year in Lowell’s life. If Lowell had died at the end of the year 1848, at the age of twenty-nine, he would have left enough work done to have assured him a place among the great men of America. It was in 1848 that he published *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, one of his most widely known literary productions.

In the years before 1848 he had been unconsciously and consciously preparing himself to be a writer and particularly a poet. His early home surroundings were delightful and beautiful. Elmwood, the square old frame house in which he was born and died, was built before the Revolution. A year before Lowell’s birth, Elmwood was bought by his father, the Reverend Charles Lowell, of the West Congregational Church, Boston. The house is on Elmwood Avenue, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a mile from the Yard of Harvard College. In Lowell’s day the house had a pleasant outlook from the front windows across farm land to the elms and spires of Cambridge. Near by was the winding Charles River. Only a few minutes away was Fresh Pond, and behind the house not many miles distant were the wooded hills and pastures of Arlington and Lexington. The young Lowell had only to look out of his windows and walk about the neighborhood to see scenes a poet might love to picture in language.

The life of the family was refined and cultured. The father was a graduate of Harvard College and had studied in England and Scotland. The mother, who was of Scotch descent, was fond of singing old ballads. An older sister was "Jemmy's" special companion. She speaks of her brother as having been very imaginative but remarkably kind and self-controlled. She was herself imaginative but high-strung. The first poetry that Lowell knew well was Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. So vivid was his imagination that in his walks he used to conjure up from Spenser's poem mystic knightly figures that were more real to him than people he knew. He played under the elms and pines and loved the bluebird's call and the chattering orioles and the shrilling robins.

A city boy or girl who never lived in the country could not easily understand such things as came easily to Lowell from his boyish outdoor life:

"We sit in the warm shade and feel right well  
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;  
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing  
That skies are clear and grass is growing;  
The breeze comes whispering in our ear  
That dandelions are blossoming near,  
That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,  
That the river is bluer than the sky,  
That the robin is plastering his house hard by."

The city boy would hardly know what maize is, still less how it sprouts; and he never saw a robin making its nest. Hence such a boy will not get as much from *The Vision of Sir Launfal* at first reading as a boy bred in the country will get. But the city boy perhaps will understand *Sir Launfal* better than the country boy in one respect. The city boy will doubtless have thought more about equality of men and about plans for making all men brothers—conceptions and projects with which

Lowell became concerned in his association with city men as he grew older.

Young Lowell liked to read. In fact, all his family were wide readers. When he was nine, he eagerly read the novels of Walter Scott, then just published and already popular among boys and also grown people.

During his years at Harvard from the age of fifteen to nineteen, he lived at home part of the time but had a room for study near the college. There were about two hundred young men at Harvard when Lowell was a student. The most interesting thing about his college course is not his study of the required Latin, Greek, and mathematics, but his reading of the English poets—Keats, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, Cowper, Southey, Milton—and his writing of a satirical “Class Poem,” copies of which were distributed among his friends and classmates. One of his college mates says that Lowell borrowed Tennyson’s first small volume of verse from Emerson.

After college, Lowell continued his reading of English, Greek, and Latin poets and dramatists, while he was studying law. He wanted to be an author but thought he would not be able to earn his living as an author and so he prepared himself to be a lawyer. He took his bachelor’s degree in law. At the same time he was forming for himself a theory of poetry.

In the autumn of 1840 he became engaged to be married to Miss Maria White. Miss White was a poet, delicately beautiful. During four years their engagement continued, while Lowell was trying to find his life work and earn enough to warrant his being married. He practiced law, acted as a clerk in an office, edited a magazine, and made his start as an author. Meanwhile, he and Miss White wrote and published tolerably good verse. They associated with an intellectually active group of young people called “The Band.” The conversation with this group enlarged Lowell’s range of interest in reading and gave him

active sympathy with people of all races, an interest in temperance, women's suffrage, and the abolition of slavery.

In speaking one day at this period of youthful enthusiasm, he said that he never felt so clearly the spirit of God in and around him; the whole room seemed full of God. Note this as you read the Prelude to Part First of *The Vision of Sir Launfal*.

His attempt to start a magazine, *The Pioneer*, failed, in spite of the fact that some of the contributors, in addition to himself, were Hawthorne, Poe, Whittier, and Mrs. Browning. One reason for the failure was that Lowell had to be absent from Boston for treatment by a New York oculist. He met in New York some of the foremost literary men of the time, who were then setting the fashion in literature. For instance, look up what a history of American literature says about N. P. Willis. Edgar Allan Poe was also one of Lowell's New York acquaintances.

Two volumes of poems by Lowell, *A Year's Life* and *Poems*, (first series,) were published. A prose work, *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets*, was also published, touching upon Spenser, Keats, Chaucer, Donne, and other poets.

On the day after Christmas, 1844, Lowell and Miss White were married. Then they went to Philadelphia, where Lowell wrote for the *Pennsylvania Freeman* and was hand in glove with a number of active workers for the abolition of slavery. He and his wife lived very simply, in a single room, third floor back, but both were well and happy. Lowell's income was small indeed. Yet he says he was ruddy and hearty, the picture of health. The writing for the *Pennsylvania Freeman* did not turn out to be altogether satisfactory to either Lowell or the publishers, and late in the spring of 1845 Mr. and Mrs. Lowell returned to Cambridge and made their home at Elmwood. The life here also was simple and happy. Lowell looked

after the chickens and helped with the work about the house. Longfellow speaks of calling on him in his attic study, the ceiling of which one could touch with one's hands. They had good talks together about the old poets and about the bold chanticleer that was the favorite in the flock of chickens.

Lowell was so full of delight in his home life and in his wonderful baby that he did very little productive writing for a time. But the death of the daughter Blanche resulted in the publication of several sorrowful poems. His income was still small, but with frugal housekeeping, in which Mrs. Lowell was a real helpmate, the Lowells managed to get along comfortably enough.

Then came the notable year of 1848, when Lowell published his second series of *Poems*, the *Fable for Critics*, the *Biglow Papers*, *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, and many articles in magazines and newspapers. His friends, Longfellow and Holmes, were especially pleased with the work done by their fellow poet this year.

The volume of poems includes political verse such as "The Present Crisis," and poems of rare beauty giving expression to the love of nature, as "An Indian Summer Reverie." The *Fable for Critics* seems out of date now, but was liked by lovers of literature in Lowell's day because of its shrewd humor and keen characterization of fellow authors—Poe, Hawthorne, and others. John Ruskin in England wrote that Lowell in the *Fable for Critics* did him more good in his moments of dullness than anybody else and made him feel hopeful.

The *Biglow Papers* helped to direct public opinion in the North against slavery. No one had previously used Yankee dialect so skillfully in driving home the need for the abolition of slavery. Quotations from this volume were on everybody's lips for a decade or more. The satire was criticised favorably by both American and English authorities in literature. One writer said, "No speech, no

plea, no appeal was comparable in popular effect with this pitiless tempest of fire and hail, in the form of wit, argument, satire, knowledge, insight, learning, common sense, and patriotism. It was humor of the purest strain, but humor in deadly earnest."

The reputation that Lowell gained through this literary work was far extended. In America he had become recognized as a leading voice among the interpreters of the American spirit, and in England there was a ready and even eager acceptance of work from his pen.

Since we are here particularly interested in *The Vision of Sir Launfal* alone, it may be sufficient to follow only as far as the memorable year of 1848 the life and fortunes of the poet Lowell. Through this study there will have come clearly to the reader a sense of the imaginative fantasy that distinguished him, the real and vital knowledge that he had of nature and her moods, and the thorough training he had given himself in the art of poetic expression of the impressions the world of nature and thought made upon his sensitive spirit.

## LIFE OF LONGFELLOW, 1807-1882

IN the same way in which many Englishmen get their history from Shakespeare's plays, many Americans learn theirs from Longfellow's poems. Americans' ideas of New England colonial life are, for example, largely obtained from Longfellow's *Courtship of Miles Standish*, rather than from the authentic old chronicles or the modern histories. As Shakespeare used the facts to suit himself, so did Longfellow. Longfellow has been as much admired and praised in the United States as Shakespeare in England.

Longfellow has for two generations been perhaps the most popular American poet. His poetry has been thus

extraordinarily popular because it appeals most to simple tastes that demand concreteness and sympathy in the literature which they praise; and yet it appeals also to the heart of the most cultured scholars. His life was so simple and his character was so amiable that every one who knew anything about him — and every one knew something about him — loved him as if he were a personal friend. The simple, tranquil life of this representative of the best American ideals of his age, as related in the authoritative biography, that by Samuel Longfellow published in 1891 in three volumes, is interesting in spite of its normal, not to say commonplace, happiness. For almost fifty years (from 1807 to 1854), Longfellow lived a scholar's life, and then for nearly thirty years (from 1854 to 1882), he lived as a poet and man of letters. His *Courtship of Miles Standish* was written and published during this second period of his life.

In many schools, the twenty-seventh of February is known as Longfellow day, for that was the birthday of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1807 at Portland, Maine. He was the son of a lawyer who could trace his ancestry back for more than a hundred and fifty years to an Edward Longfellow, of Horsforth, England, through a line of sturdy and mostly prosperous colonists — blacksmiths, schoolmasters, judges. His mother's father was General Peleg Wadsworth, a Revolutionary soldier of distinction; his mother was a descendant of Priscilla Alden. Longfellow was named after Henry, one of the brothers of his mother, and was given also the family name, Wadsworth. At General Wadsworth's home, which was the first brick house built in Portland, and which is still standing (admission twenty-five cents), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow spent his boyhood. His delight in the childhood life in Portland is evident in his poem, "My Lost Youth." He had plenty of books to read in his father's library — the poems of Milton, Pope, Dryden, Cowper, Moore; *Don*

*Quixote* and the successive numbers of Irving's *Sketch Book*, which began to appear in 1819. He did not read, like Poe, the poems of Shelley, Keats, and Byron, the passionate romanticists of the early nineteenth century. At the private schools which he attended he is spoken of as a handsome schoolboy, thoughtful but not melancholy; not averse to the quieter sports, but more fond of a book under the trees. His home life was idyllic in its charm. At the age of thirteen the boy was made happy by seeing his first poem printed anonymously in the *Portland Gazette*.

When he was fifteen he entered Bowdoin College, at Brunswick, Maine. Probably the reason why he did not go to his father's college, Harvard, was that his father was a trustee of Bowdoin, which had been opened in 1802. At Bowdoin he knew Hawthorne and Franklin Pierce. His college life simply continued the training he had received at home and in the private schools. He studied faithfully the mathematics, natural sciences, and philosophy of the course. From his study of the classics and his reading in the college library he acquired a perspicuous but balanced English prose style. While at Bowdoin he wrote verses for the newspapers; fourteen of these were published the year after his graduation in a volume entitled *Miscellaneous Poems selected from the United States Literary Gazette*. Of these the best known is "Hymn of the Moravian Nuns." He finished his course at the age of eighteen, and was asked to go abroad to prepare himself for a Bowdoin professorship of modern languages. His father allowed him six hundred dollars a year for a three years' stay in Europe.

Thirsting for the springs of old culture, reverently alert for impressions of European life, the young American scholar took passage for Havre. His youthful enjoyment of all that he saw and felt is evident on every page of the notes which he published several years after his return.

The extent of his travels is indicated by a sentence from the early part of his book:—

“In this my pilgrimage, ‘I have passed many lands and countries, and searched many full strange places.’ I have traversed France from Normandy to Navarre; smoked my pipe in a Flemish inn; floated through Holland in a *Trekschuit*; trimmed my midnight lamp in a German university; wandered and mused amid the classic scenes of Italy; and listened to the gay guitar and merry castanet on the borders of the blue Guadalquivir.” (From *Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage beyond the Sea*.) A characteristic passage showing how he relished his European travel is this: “My recollections of Spain are of the most lively and delightful kind. The character of the soil and of its inhabitants,—the stormy mountains and free spirits of the North,—the prodigal luxuriance and gay voluptuousness of the South,—the history and traditions of the past, resembling more the fables of romance than the solemn chronicle of events,—a soft and yet majestic language that falls like martial music on the ear, and a literature rich in the attractive lore of poetry and fiction,—these, but not these alone, are my reminiscences of Spain.”

On his return to the United States, he took up at Bowdoin the wearing work of teaching, yet he entered upon it with enthusiasm in the belief that it would allow him time to write as he might be inclined. Instead of doing original work, however, he made text-books, excellent of their kind and for their purpose. He edited French texts, translated a French grammar, and made French, Spanish, and Italian readers. His recitations and lectures he prepared for painstakingly. The students liked him; he enjoyed them. His influence during his six years of teaching at Bowdoin was of the best. Other colleges tried to secure his services, but he preferred Bowdoin until a call came to follow Ticknor in the chair of modern lan-

guages at Harvard. Longfellow accepted and went abroad for further study, particularly of German, which he never cared for so much as the French and Spanish and Italian languages and literatures; in these he had already become extremely proficient. His acceptance of the Harvard professorship took him in the autumn of 1836 to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where, living for the remaining years of his life, he became a quiet but powerful influence for widening culture, and where, having more time to himself than at Bowdoin, he became the chief of the "Cambridge Poets." During his Harvard teaching he published several volumes of prose and poetry: *Hyperion, a Romance*, 1839; *Voices of the Night*, 1839, which contained translations and nine original poems; *Ballads, and Other Poems*, 1841; *Poems on Slavery*, 1842; *The Spanish Student*, a three-act play, 1843; *The Belfry of Bruges, and Other Poems*, 1845; *Evangeline*, 1847; *Kavanagh, a Tale*, 1849; *The Seaside and the Fireside*, 1849; and *The Golden Legend*, 1851. In the year 1854, he was succeeded at Harvard by his friend James Russell Lowell.

Thus far no mention has been made of Longfellow's domestic affairs. In 1831, at the age of twenty-two, he was married to Mary Storer Potter, of Portland. With her, for four years, he lived a contented, peaceful life. Mrs. Longfellow was beautiful in appearance, happy in disposition, and sympathetic and appreciative in her husband's intellectual work. The shock of her death in Holland while he was studying in preparation for his Harvard professorship changed Longfellow from a youth in spirit to a grown man. At Cambridge he took rooms in the Craigie House. This fine old colonial building is now pointed out to every Cambridge visitor as the Longfellow home, for here Longfellow lived the rest of his life, except for summers on the New England coast and several European journeys. In the hero of *Hyperion* he had

sketched his own bitterness of thought during the year following the death of his first wife, and in the heroine he had sketched the character of Miss Frances Appleton, who became in July, 1843, his second wife. At their marriage, Miss Appleton's father bought for them the Craigie mansion. Here, for some years, their life was like the home life of the best New England families of the day — children at play, fireside reading, entertainments, calls, concerts, plays, enough work to keep the domestic delight from palling by monotony of idleness. In the year 1854 Longfellow and his wife decided that they could afford to live without his salary as professor, and he resigned.

From 1854 till his death in 1882 Longfellow, relieved entirely from professional duties, did some of his best work as poet and man of letters. He continued to dream along in the peaceful existence already started at Cambridge, all the time growing in the affections of the people till the whole nation came to love him. Among the literary men of New England he was the dean. In the gatherings of the Saturday Club, which included Whittier, Emerson, Lowell, and Hawthorne among its members, Longfellow took particular joy. He was long a friend of Senator Charles Sumner. The young scholar Andrew D. White visited Longfellow in 1867 at his beautiful summer cottage at Nahant. In his *Autobiography* White speaks of Longfellow as "a most lovely being." As they sat on the veranda looking out over the ocean and discussing political events, the poet turned to the young scholar and statesman and said, "Mr. White, don't you think Horace Greeley a very useless sort of man?" The dreamy poet could not understand at all the point of view of the practical man of affairs, the great editor of the New York *Tribune*. Four years later White dined with the poet at his Cambridge home. The host enjoyed showing the places in this house that were connected

with interesting passages in the life of Washington when he occupied the house. These details given by Dr. White in his recollections afford a characteristic glimpse of the life of the celebrated Cambridge man of letters in this period of poetic ease.

In that curious back-hand of his, not so legible and print-like as Poe's handwriting, Longfellow produced in this second period enough original poetry, translation, and editorial work to make a small library. In narrative poetry he published *The Song of Hiawatha*, 1855, considered by many critics his greatest achievement because it is the nearest approach to an American epic. Narrative also is *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, published in 1858. This seems to me his greatest poem because it dwells with consummate poetical art upon a world-appreciated theme and because it gives with absolute faithfulness the spirit of the early New England Puritanism. *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, 1863, is a popular collection of local pictures and old-world stories in pleasing verse. His most ambitious production was published in 1872 under the heading *Christus, a Mystery*; it consisted of three parts, "The Divine Tragedy," "The Golden Legend," and "The New England Tragedies," and except for the second part, which had been already printed, is practically unread among its author's works. His other principal volumes of poems are "Aftermath," "The Hanging of the Crane," "Masque of Pandora," "Keramos," "Ultima Thule," and "In the Harbor." During this period he composed a group of sonnets which easily rank him as the chief American sonnet writer. The translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, 1870, is the crowning achievement of the scholar, postponed till his time of ease. Though not in every respect a great translation of Dante's epic, it is true to the original and not lacking in Dante's poetic fire. Longfellow's editorial work included the editing of thirty-one volumes of *Poems of*

*Places.* Such was the extensive work of the man of letters in Cambridge, from 1854 to 1882, in original poetry, in translation, and in compilation.

The life at Cambridge was not all happiness, for, eighteen years after his second marriage, his wife was burned so badly by the upturning of a candle on her dress that she soon died. Thereafter Longfellow lived in the Cambridge home with his children, the care and education of whom occupied his thoughts to the banishment of loneliness. It was only when his distinguished friends died, one by one, that he began to feel the weight of his years. In March, 1882, he died, and was buried in Cambridge. The period of his life in Cambridge was, curiously enough, almost exactly the time of the supremacy of New England as a literary center.

In the sketch of Longfellow's life, little mention has been made of specific short poems, such as "A Psalm of Life," "The Rainy Day" (written in the Portland home), "Excelsior," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "The Building of the Ship," "The Village Blacksmith," and "Paul Revere's Ride," which every schoolboy knows. It would have been superfluous to discuss these poems, for they have always appealed to the hearts of the American people and have done as much as the longer narrative poems to give their author his extraordinary popularity. But it was by such longer poems as *The Courtship of Miles Standish* that Longfellow established his claim to a place among the poets of world-wide appeal, and it was by such writing that he merited recognition in Westminster Abbey, the temple of fame for the English-speaking nations. There, two years after his death, a bust of Longfellow was placed, with ceremonies which testified to the esteem in which he is held by all who speak the English language.

## LIFE OF WHITTIER, 1807-1892

IN *The Appreciation of Literature*, George E. Woodberry speaks of Whittier's *Snow-Bound*, Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, and Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night* as imperishable monuments to that "home-feeling which is so profound an element in the character as well as the affections of English-speaking people the world over." Inevitably popular are the poets who express this home-feeling. Next to Longfellow, Whittier has come closer to the heart of the nation than any other American poet. Known everywhere as the household Quaker poet, he is celebrated also as the poet who did more than any other to crystallize northern sentiment against slavery. These two phases of his work seem contradictory, but when his life is read in such an interesting and discriminating biography as that by George R. Carpenter in the American Men of Letters series, the contradiction is found to be apparent and not real, for Whittier was a poet appealing all the time to the best instincts of his nation. His life may best be considered in three periods: the first including his boyhood and early efforts at literature; the second, his freedom work; and the third, his life as a mature, tranquil poet. It was in this third period that he wrote his greatest poem, *Snow-Bound*.

The house where he was born on December 17, 1807, is one mile to the northeast of Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts, near Great Pond, known also as Lake Kenoza. This farmhouse is the scene of *Snow-Bound* and is now marked by a bronze tablet. Whittier's great-great-grandfather built the house about 1688; Whittiers had lived there ever since, all of them substantial pioneers and farmers of good repute, all of them husbands of farmers' daughters. The great-grandfather married a Quakeress, whose religion he adopted. The grandfather married Sarah Greenleaf. The poet was given the name of his

father and the family name of his grandmother. John Greenleaf Whittier started in life with a hundred and fifty years of New England independent struggle for existence back of him. In his youth he continued the struggle, but with a weaker body and more sensitive temperament than his ancestors possessed. He worked on the ancestral farm, with intermissions of shoe-making and academy attendance and school-teaching, until he was twenty-one. When he was nearly nineteen his first printed poem appeared in the Newburyport *Free Press*. Whittier had been led early to the writing of poetry by his reading of Burns, Gray, Cowper, Scott, and Mrs. Hemans; then when he was disappointed in love he read Byron. All of his own early poetry was imitative of the poets whom he had read. The Newburyport paper was edited by William Lloyd Garrison who subsequently became the great anti-slavery agitator and who influenced Whittier in this direction. In 1828 Whittier wrote to Garrison a letter commending his views on slavery, intemperance, and war.

Through Garrison's recommendation, Whittier, then just of age, left the farm and became editor, at nine dollars a week, of *The American Manufacturer*, published in Boston. After seven months he was called home to Haverhill by the sickness of his father, who died the next year. During the interval Whittier worked the farm and edited the local paper. A month after his father's death he became editor of *The New England Review*, of Hartford, Connecticut. This position made him conversant with the political events of the time, brought him a wide friendship among editors, and a national reputation through the copying of his Hartford articles in other papers. In his leisure hours in Boston and Hartford "the gay young Quaker" read much in the best English fiction and poetry. His first book, *Legends of New England*, exhibiting a little of the weirdness later character-

istic of Poe, was published in Hartford in 1831. Shortly after his return, in poor health, to Haverhill, he wrote to a friend that he had done with poetry and literature, and would now be a farmer. Yet he hankered for an election to Congress and might perhaps have secured it, through the confidence his neighbors had in his shrewdness and the esteem in which they held him because of his Boston and Hartford editorships, had he not definitely allied himself in 1833 with the abolitionist movement. Thus far, from his youthful prose and poetry, he had gained a reputation in literature second to none of his contemporaries, in spite of which nothing which he early wrote is at the present time much read. Now began the second period of his life.

As a reformer, from 1833 to 1860, striving with Quaker intensity to uphold the principle of the equality of man, Whittier won the respect of the nation and the hootings of particular crowds. This was the time of his greatest effort in life; in these years he accomplished what he considered to be his most valuable service to his country. Not literature, but abolition, was his chief interest. Yet, since slavery is no more, we are now concerned rather with Whittier's literary life than with his life as a reformer and so must pass quickly over this second phase of his career. In June, 1833, influenced by the appeals of his friend Garrison to throw his influence into the cause of abolition, he published, at his own expense, a pamphlet entitled, "Justice and Expediency: or, Slavery Considered with a View to Its Rightful and Effectual Remedy, Abolition." This pamphlet illustrates Whittier's part in the abolition movement; he continued for more than twenty-five years to write essays and poems aiming to appeal to the reason and to bring about the abolition of slavery by public opinion as expressed by votes. He was one of the secretaries of the first national anti-slavery convention in Philadelphia and signed its declaration. In

1835 he was a member of the Massachusetts legislature. In Concord, New Hampshire, he was mobbed in company with George Thompson, the English anti-slavery agitator. He kept Thompson, whose life was in danger, hidden for two weeks in the farmhouse. Soon after, during the rioting by a mob in Washington Street, Boston, Whittier was threatened with personal violence. A little later he was in New York for several months in the office of the American anti-slavery society, and almost became engaged to a young lady of Brooklyn. In 1838, when he was in Philadelphia editing the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, his office was sacked and burned by a mob, but he saved some of his belongings by disguising himself in a long white coat and a wig so that he could mingle with the mob without being known. He kept on editing the paper till his health failed.

Then he took up his residence with his mother, aunt, and younger sister, Elizabeth, in Amesbury, eight miles from his birthplace, in a house which is now maintained as a memorial of the poet. Here his mother died in 1858. He edited at Lowell, Massachusetts, *The Middlesex Standard* in 1844, and in 1847 became corresponding editor of *The National Era*, published at Washington. In 1849 he received five hundred dollars for the copyright of all his verse thus far published. Next year, he met James T. Fields, the friend of all the New England poets, and hereafter his poems were published by Ticknor and Fields. In 1857 this firm brought out his collected poems. In spite of his numerous reform articles and poems, including the famous poem "Ichabod" and the volumes entitled *Voices of Freedom* and *Songs of Labor*, in spite of his five prose volumes containing wonderfully keen essays analyzing and depicting early New England life and character, and in spite of a number of poems of national reputation, such as "The Barefoot Boy," "Skipper Ireson's Ride," and "Maud Muller," written from 1833

to 1860, he would hardly be assured a permanent place among the best American poets, if he had not in the maturity of his years returned to the themes of his boyhood and written one imperishable poem on the New England life as he knew it when he was a boy.

Since Whittier was a reformer, with his soul on fire for the abolition of slavery, it might be thought that a fitting end to the second period of his life would be the end of the war rather than the beginning. But no! As a Quaker, Whittier had a horror of war; he sympathized with the North, but he believed it would be better to let the South go rather than to fight. Thus he turned from his one absorbing great passion, his contention for freedom, to a tranquil life as a poet, a period of thirty-two years (from 1860 to 1892), in no part of which because of ill health was he able to do a full day's work and in most of which he found it impossible to read or write for more than a half-hour at a time. In these years he grew steadily in the affections of the people. During the war his verses were cries of those who were bereaved and prayers for God to let the right be done. Some of his songs were sung by the northern soldiers, President Lincoln saying that he wanted the soldiers to hear such songs as Whittier's. His ballad of "Barbara Frietchie" and his "Laus Deo" are his best known poems produced in war times.

After the war he wrote a number of religious poems which appear in collections of hymns sung by various denominations. "I have been a member of the Society of Friends by birthright and by a settled conviction of the truth of its principles and the importance of its testimonies, while, at the same time, I have a kind feeling towards all who are seeking, in different ways from mine, to serve God and benefit their fellow-men." Thus Whittier wrote regarding his religious faith. It was this breadth of sympathy that made his religious songs acceptable to all true worshipers.

*Snow-Bound*, which he says he wrote to beguile the weariness of a sick-room, at once became one of the "best sellers" of the day. From the time of its publication in 1866, the surprising profits from its sale made Whittier a well-to-do man. Among the other poems of this period are "The Maids of Attitash," "Among the Hills," "Amy Wentworth," "My Playmate," "The Henchman," and "Sea Dream." But *Snow-Bound* is the poem on which Whittier's fame as a poet most securely rests.

After the death of his sister, in 1864, his brother's daughter, Elizabeth Whittier, kept house for him at Amesbury until her marriage in 1876 to S. T. Pickard, who became his biographer. Whittier continued to vote at Amesbury, but spent much of his time with his cousins, the Misses Johnson, at Oak Knoll, Danvers, Massachusetts. At Amesbury, this kindly old bachelor, famous as he was, used to like to sit in the shop of the village tailor and talk with his neighbors. Occasionally he traveled to Boston to see his publishers and enjoy an evening with the Saturday Club, to which Longfellow also belonged. He spent his summers on Lake Winnipesaukee or at the Isles of Shoals or at Amesbury. The life all the year was easier and quieter than in earlier days. He wrote when he felt inclined; he had an income more than sufficient for his simple needs. He had not many close friends, though numerous acquaintances, among the contemporary men of letters: Bayard Taylor, Holmes, Hawthorne, Emerson, Lowell, and Longfellow; the southern poet, Paul Hamilton Hayne, who was much attracted by his broad spirit; the English writers, Dickens and Kingsley. Much of his time he spent in writing letters to gifted ladies — Lucy Larcom, Alice and Phœbe Cary, Celia Thaxter, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Mrs. Fields.

In 1877, when he was seventy years old, he was the guest of honor at a dinner given by the publishers of

*The Atlantic Monthly* to distinguished contributors. Ten years later, on his eightieth birthday, he was congratulated at Oak Knoll by the governor of the state and a committee, for he was nearly the last of the great New England abolitionists and poets. In 1892 he died and was buried in the village cemetery at Amesbury, where the other members of his family had been buried before him.

He was, as one of his biographers says, the last survivor of the circle that gathered about the hearth in the snow-bound homestead. Such was his art in the unique and imperishable poem, *Snow-Bound*, that there is no family in the world whose members are so widely known among the people who speak the English tongue.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL  
THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

PRELUDE TO PART FIRST

Over his keys the musing organist,<sup>1</sup>  
Beginning doubtfully and far away,  
First lets his fingers wander as they list,  
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay;  
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument  
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,  
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent  
Along the wavering vista of his dream.

Not only around our infancy <sup>2</sup>  
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie;  
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,  
We Sinais <sup>3</sup> climb and know it not.  
Over our manhood bend the skies;  
Against our fallen and traitor lives  
The great winds utter prophecies;  
With our faint hearts the mountain strives;  
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood <sup>4</sup>  
Waits with its benedicite;

And to our age's drowsy blood  
Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;  
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,  
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,  
We bargain for the graves we lie in;  
At the Devil's booth are all things sold,  
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;  
For a cap and bells <sup>1</sup> our lives we pay,  
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking;  
'T is heaven alone that is given away,  
'T is only God may be had for the asking;  
No price is set on the lavish summer;  
June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June?  
Then, if ever, come perfect days;  
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,  
And over it softly her warm ear lays;  
Whether we look, or whether we listen,  
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;  
Every clod feels a stir of might,  
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,  
And, groping blindly above it for light,  
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;

The flush of life may well be seen  
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;  
The cowslip startles in meadows green,<sup>1</sup>  
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,  
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean  
To be some happy creature's palace;  
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,  
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,  
And lets his illumined being o'errun  
With the deluge of summer it receives;  
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,  
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;  
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest,—  
In the nice<sup>2</sup> ear of Nature which song is the  
best?

Now is the high-tide of the year,  
And whatever of life hath ebbed away  
Comes flooding back, with a rippy cheer,  
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay;  
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,  
We are happy now because God wills it;  
No matter how barren the past may have been,  
'T is enough for us now that the leaves are green;  
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well  
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;

We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing  
That skies are clear and grass is growing;  
The breeze comes whispering in our ear  
That dandelions are blossoming near,

That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,  
That the river is bluer than the sky,  
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;  
And if the breeze kept the good news back,  
For other couriers<sup>1</sup> we should not lack;

We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing,—  
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,  
Warmed with the new wine of the year,  
Tells all in his lusty crowing!

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;  
Everything is happy now,

Everything is upward striving;  
'T is as easy now for the heart to be true  
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,—  
'T is the natural way of living.

Who knows whither the clouds have fled?

In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;  
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,  
The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;  
The soul partakes of the season's youth,  
And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe

Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,  
Like burnt-out craters<sup>1</sup> healed with snow.  
What wonder if Sir Launfal now  
Remembered the keeping of his vow?

## PART FIRST

## I

“My golden spurs now bring to me,  
And bring to me my richest mail,<sup>2</sup>  
For to-morrow I go over land and sea  
In search of the Holy Grail;  
Shall never a bed for me be spread,  
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,  
Till I begin my vow to keep;  
Here on the rushes<sup>3</sup> will I sleep,  
And perchance there may come a vision true  
Ere day create the world anew.”

Slowly Sir Launfal’s eyes grew dim,  
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,  
And into his soul the vision flew.

## II

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,  
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees,  
The little birds sang as if it were  
The one day of summer in all the year,

And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees:  
The castle alone in the landscape lay  
Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray;  
'T was the proudest hall in the North Countree,<sup>1</sup>  
And never its gates might opened be,  
Save to lord or lady of high degree;  
Summer besieged it on every side,  
But the churlish stone her assaults defied;  
She could not scale the chilly wall,  
Though around it for leagues her pavilions<sup>2</sup> tall  
Stretched left and right,  
Over the hills and out of sight;  
    Green and broad was every tent,  
    And out of each a murmur went  
Till the breeze fell off at night.

## III

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,  
And through the dark arch a charger<sup>3</sup> sprang,  
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,<sup>4</sup>  
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright  
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all  
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall  
    In his siege of three hundred summers<sup>5</sup> long,  
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,  
Had cast them forth: so, young and strong,

And lightsome as a locust leaf,<sup>1</sup>  
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail,  
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

## IV

It was morning on hill and stream and tree,  
And morning in the young knight's heart;  
Only the castle moodily  
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,  
And gloomed by itself apart;  
The season brimmed all other things up  
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

## V

As Sir Launfal made morn<sup>2</sup> through the darksome  
gate,  
He was 'ware<sup>3</sup> of a leper, crouched by the same,  
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate;  
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came;  
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,  
The flesh 'neath his armor 'gan shrink and  
crawl,  
And midway its leap his heart stood still  
Like a frozen waterfall;  
For this man, so foul and bent of stature,  
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,

And seemed the one blot on the summer morn,—  
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

## VI

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:  
“Better to me the poor man’s crust,  
Better the blessing of the poor,  
Though I turn me empty from his door;  
That is no true alms which the hand can hold;

He gives nothing but worthless gold

Who gives from a sense of duty;  
But he who gives but a slender mite,  
And gives to that which is out of sight,

That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty  
Which runs through all and doth all unite,—  
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,  
The heart outstretches its eager palms,  
For a god goes with it and makes it store  
To the soul that was starving in darkness before.”

## PRELUDE TO PART SECOND

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,  
From the snow five thousand summers old;<sup>1</sup>  
On open wold and hill-top bleak  
It had gathered all the cold,<sup>2</sup>  
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;  
It carried a shiver everywhere  
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare;  
The little brook heard it and built a roof  
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof;  
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams  
He groined his arches and matched his beams;  
Slender and clear were his crystal spars  
As the lashes of light that trim the stars;  
He sculptured every summer delight  
In his halls and chambers out of sight;  
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt  
Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt,  
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees  
Bending to counterfeit a breeze;  
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew  
But silvery mosses that downward grew;

Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief  
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf; <sup>1</sup>  
Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear  
For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and  
here

He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops  
And hung them thickly with diamond-drops,  
That crystallised the beams of moon and sun,  
And made a star of every one.

No mortal builder's <sup>2</sup> most rare device  
Could match this winter-palace of ice;  
'T was as if every image that mirrored lay  
In his depths serene through the summer day,  
Each fleeting shadow of earth and sky,  
Lest the happy model should be lost,  
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry  
By the elfin builders of the frost.

Within the hall are song and laughter,  
The cheeks of Christmas <sup>3</sup> grow red and jolly,  
And sprouting is every corbel <sup>4</sup> and rafter  
With lightsome green of ivy and holly;  
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide  
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide;  
The broad flame-pennons droop <sup>5</sup> and flap  
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind;

Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,  
Hunted to death in its galleries blind;  
And swift little troops of silent sparks,  
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,  
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks  
Like herds of startled deer.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,  
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,  
And rattles and wrings  
The icy strings,  
Singing, in dreary monotone,  
A Christmas carol of its own,  
Whose burden still, as he might guess,  
Was—"Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"

The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch  
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,  
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night  
The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,  
Through the window-slits of the castle old,  
Build out its piers of ruddy light  
Against the drift of the cold.

## PART SECOND

## I

There was never a leaf on bush or tree,  
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly;  
The river was dumb and could not speak,  
For the weaver Winter its shroud had spun;  
A single crow on the tree-top bleak  
From his shining feathers shed off the cold  
sun;  
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,  
As if her veins were sapless and old,  
And she rose up decrepitly  
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

## II

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate,  
For another heir in his earldom sate;  
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,  
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail;  
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,  
No more on his surcoat was blazoned the  
cross,<sup>1</sup>  
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,  
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

## III

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare  
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,  
For it was just at the Christmas time;  
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,  
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow  
In the light and warmth of long ago;  
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl  
O'er the edge of the desert, black and small,  
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,  
He can count the camels in the sun,  
As over the red-hot sands they pass  
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,  
The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade,  
And with its own self like an infant played,  
And waved its signal of palms.

## IV

“For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an alms;”  
The happy camels may reach the spring,  
But Sir Launfal sees only the grawsome thing,  
The leper, lank as the rain-blanch'd bone,<sup>1</sup>  
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone  
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas  
In the desolate horror of his disease.

## V

And Sir Launfal said,—“I behold in thee  
An image of Him who died on the tree;  
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,  
Thou also hast had the world’s buffets and scorns,—  
And to thy life were not denied  
The wounds in the hands and feet and side:  
Mild Mary’s Son, acknowledge me;  
Behold, through him, I give to thee!”

## VI

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes  
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he  
Remembered in what a haughtier guise  
He had flung an alms to leprosie,  
When he girt his young life up in gilded mail  
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.  
The heart within him was ashes and dust;  
He parted in twain his single crust,  
He broke the ice on the streamlet’s brink,  
And gave the leper to eat and drink;  
’T was a moldy crust of coarse brown bread,  
’T was water out of a wooden bowl,—  
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,  
And ’t was red wine he drank with his thirsty  
soul.

## VII

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,  
A light shone round about the place;  
The leper no longer crouched at his side,  
But stood before him glorified,  
Shining and tall and fair and straight  
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate <sup>1</sup>—  
Himself the Gate whereby men can  
Enter the temple of God in Man.

## VIII

His words were shed softer than leaves from the  
pine,  
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,  
That mingle their softness and quiet in one  
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;  
And the voice that was softer than silence said,  
“Lo, it is I, be not afraid!  
In many climes, without avail,  
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;  
Behold, it is here,—this cup which thou  
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;  
This crust is my body broken for thee,  
This water his blood that died on the tree;  
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
In whatso we share with another’s need,—

Not what we give, but what we share,—  
For the gift without the giver is bare;  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—  
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.”

## IX

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swound:—  
“The Grail in my castle here is found!  
Hang my idle armor up on the wall,  
Let it be the spider’s banquet-hall;  
He must be fenced with stronger mail  
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail.”

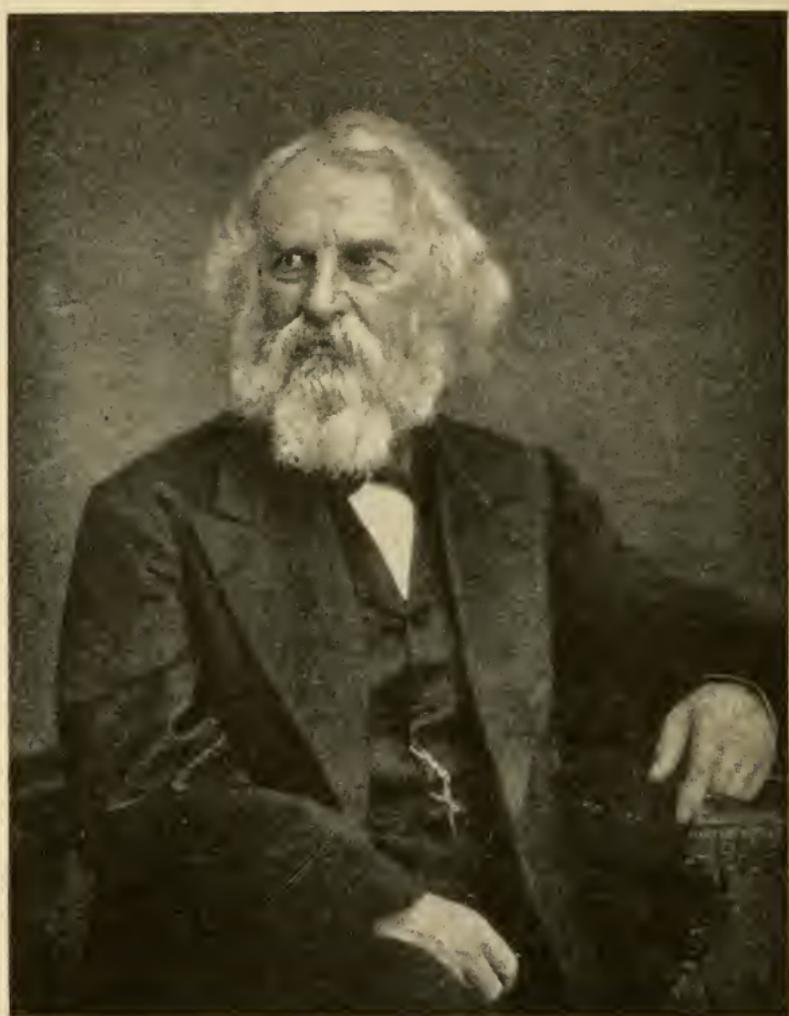
## X

The castle gate stands open now,  
And the wanderer is welcome to the hall  
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough;  
No longer scowl the turrets tall,  
The Summer’s long siege at last is o’er;  
When the first poor outcast went in at the  
door,  
She entered with him in disguise,  
And mastered the fortress by surprise;  
There is no spot she loves so well on ground,  
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;

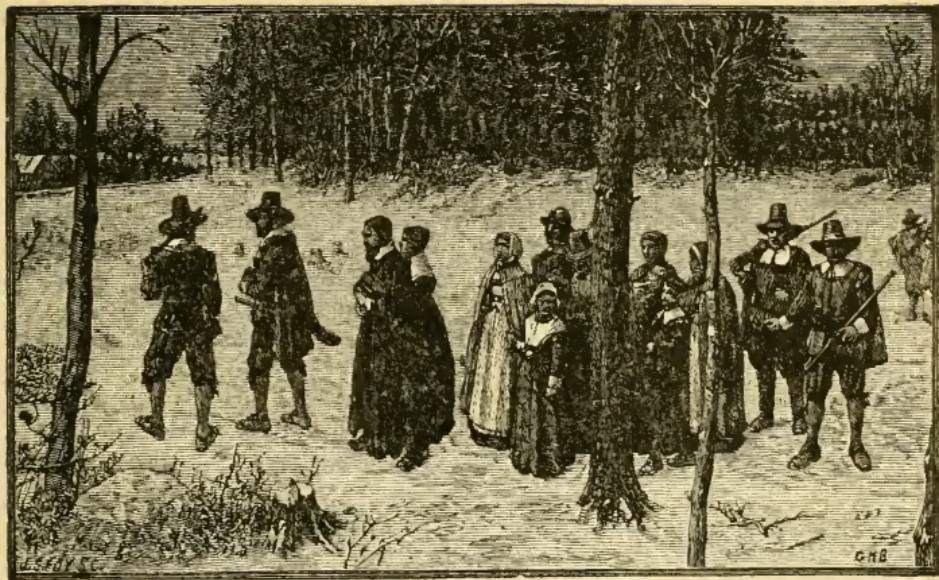
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land  
Has hall and bower at his command;  
And there's no poor man in the North Countree  
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.







HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW



## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

### THE COURTSHIP OF MILES STANDISH

#### I

##### MILES STANDISH

IN the Old Colony days,<sup>1</sup> in Plymouth the land  
of the Pilgrims,  
To and fro in a room of his simple and primitive  
dwelling,  
Clad in doublet and hose, and boots of Cordovan<sup>2</sup>  
leather,  
Strode, with martial air, Miles Standish<sup>3</sup> the Puritan  
Captain.

Buried in thought he seemed, with his hands behind  
him, and pausing  
Ever and anon to behold his glittering weapons of  
warfare,  
Hanging in shining array along the walls of his  
chamber, —  
Cutlass and corselet of steel, and his trusty sword of  
Damascus,<sup>1</sup>  
Curved <sup>2</sup> at the point and inscribed with its mystical  
Arabic sentence,  
While underneath, in a corner, were fowling-piece,  
musket, and matchlock.  
Short of stature he was, but strongly built and ath-  
letic,  
Broad in the shoulders, deep-chested, with muscles  
and sinews of iron;  
Brown as a nut was his face, but his russet beard  
was already  
Flaked with patches of snow, as hedges sometimes  
in November.  
Near him was seated John Alden,<sup>3</sup> his friend and  
household companion,  
Writing with diligent speed at a table of pine by  
the window;  
Fair-haired, azure-eyed, with delicate Saxon com-  
plexion,

Having the dew of his youth, and the beauty thereof,  
as the captives  
Whom Saint Gregory saw, and exclaimed, "Not  
Angles<sup>1</sup> but Angels."  
Youngest of all was he of the men who came in the  
Mayflower.

Suddenly breaking the silence, the diligent scribe<sup>2</sup>  
interrupting,  
Spake, in the pride of his heart, Miles Standish the  
Captain of Plymouth.  
"Look at these arms," he said, "the warlike weapons  
that hang here  
Burnished and bright and clean, as if for parade or  
inspection!  
This is the sword of Damascus I fought with in  
Flanders;<sup>3</sup> this breastplate, —  
Well I remember the day! once saved my life in a  
skirmish;  
Here in front you can see the very dint of the bullet  
Fired point-blank at my heart by a Spanish arca-  
bucero.<sup>4</sup>  
Had it not been of sheer steel, the forgotten bones  
of Miles Standish  
Would at this moment be mold, in their grave in  
the Flemish morasses."

Thereupon answered John Alden, but looked not up from his writing:

“Truly the breath<sup>1</sup> of the Lord hath slackened the speed of the bullet;

He in his mercy preserved you, to be our shield and our weapon!”

Still the Captain continued, unheeding the words of the stripling:

“See, how bright they are burnished, as if in an arsenal hanging;

That is because I have done it myself, and not left it to others.

Serve yourself,<sup>2</sup> would you be well served, is an excellent adage;

So I take care of my arms, as you of your pens and your inkhorn.

Then, too, there are my soldiers, my great, invincible army,

Twelve men, all equipped, having each his rest<sup>3</sup> and his matchlock,

Eighteen shillings a month, together with diet and pillage,

And, like Cæsar, I know the name of each of my soldiers!”

This he said with a smile, that danced in his eyes, as the sunbeams

Dance on the waves of the sea, and vanish again in a moment.

Alden laughed <sup>1</sup> as he wrote, and still the Captain continued:

“Look! you can see from this window my brazen howitzer planted

High on the roof of the church, a preacher <sup>2</sup> who speaks to the purpose,

Steady, straightforward, and strong, with irresistible logic,

Orthodox, flashing conviction right into the hearts of the heathen.

Now we are ready, I think, for any assault of the Indians:

Let them come if they like, and the sooner they try it the better,—

Let them come if they like, be it sagamore,<sup>3</sup> sachem, or pow-wow,

Aspinet, Samoset, Corbitant, Squanto, or Tokamahon!”

Long at the window he stood, and wistfully gazed on the landscape,

Washed with a cold gray mist, the vapory breath of the east wind,

Forest <sup>4</sup> and meadow and hill, and the steel-blue rim of the ocean,

Lying silent and sad, in the afternoon shadows and  
sunshine.

Over his countenance flitted a shadow like those on  
the landscape,

Gloom intermingled with light; and his voice was  
subdued with emotion,

Tenderness, pity, regret, as after a pause he pro-  
ceeded:

“Yonder there, on the hill by the sea, lies buried  
Rose Standish;

Beautiful rose of love, that bloomed for me by the  
wayside!

She was the first to die of all who came in the May-  
flower!

Green above her is growing the field of wheat we  
have sown there,

Better to hide from the Indian scouts the graves of  
our people,

Lest they should count them and see how many  
already have perished!”

Sadly his face he averted, and strode up and down,  
and was thoughtful.

Fixed to the opposite wall was a shelf of books,  
and among them

Prominent three,<sup>1</sup> distinguished alike for bulk and  
for binding;

Barriffe's Artillery Guide,<sup>1</sup> and the Commentaries<sup>2</sup>  
of Cæsar,

Out of the Latin translated by Arthur Goldinge of  
London,

And, as if guarded by these, between them was  
standing the Bible.

Musing a moment before them, Miles Standish  
paused, as if doubtful

Which of the three he should choose for his conso-  
lation and comfort,

Whether the wars of the Hebrews, the famous cam-  
paigns of the Romans,

Or the Artillery practice, designed for belligerent  
Christians.

Finally down from its shelf he dragged the ponder-  
ous Roman,

Seated himself at the window, and opened the book,  
and in silence

Turned o'er the well-worn leaves, where thumb-  
marks thick<sup>3</sup> on the margin,

Like the trample of feet, proclaimed the battle was  
hottest.

Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying  
pen of the stripling,

Busily writing epistles important, to go by the  
Mayflower,

Ready to sail on the morrow, or next day at latest,  
God willing!

Homeward bound<sup>1</sup> with the tidings of all that  
terrible winter,

Letters written by Alden, and full of the name of  
Priscilla, .

Full of the name and the fame of the Puritan  
maiden Priscilla!

## II

### LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying  
pen of the stripling,

Or an occasional sigh from the laboring heart of  
the Captain,

Reading the marvelous words and achievements  
of Julius Cæsar.

After a while he exclaimed, as he smote with his  
hand, palm downwards,

Heavily on the page: "A wonderful man was this  
Cæsar!

You are a writer, and I am a fighter, but here is a  
fellow

Who could both write and fight, and in both was  
equally skillful!"

Straightway answered and spake John Alden, the comely, the youthful:

“Yes, he was equally skilled, as you say, with his pen and his weapons.

Somewhere have I read, but where I forget, he could dictate

Seven letters at once, at the same time writing his memoirs.”

“Truly,” continued the Captain, not heeding or hearing the other,

“Truly a wonderful man was this Caius Julius Cæsar!

‘Better be first,’<sup>1</sup> he said, ‘in a little Iberian village,

Than be second in Rome,’ and I think he was right when he said it.

Twice was he married before he was twenty, and many times after;

Battles five hundred he fought, and a thousand cities he conquered;

He, too, fought in Flanders, as he himself has recorded;

Finally he was stabbed by his friend, the orator Brutus!

Now, do you know what he did on a certain occasion in Flanders,

When the rear guard of his army retreated, the  
front giving way too,  
And the immortal Twelfth Legion was crowded so  
closely together  
There was no room for their swords? Why, he  
seized a shield from a soldier,  
Put himself straight at the head of his troops, and  
commanded the captains,  
Calling on each by his name, to order forward the  
ensigns;  
Then to widen the ranks, and give more room for  
their weapons;  
So he won the day, the battle of something-or-other.  
That's what I always say; if you wish a thing to be  
well done,  
You must do it yourself, you must not leave it to  
others!"

All was silent again; the Captain continued his  
reading.

Nothing was heard <sup>1</sup> in the room but the hurrying  
pen of the stripling  
Writing epistles important to go next day by the  
Mayflower,  
Filled with the name and the fame of the Puritan  
maiden Priscilla;

Every sentence began or closed with the name of  
Priscilla,<sup>1</sup>

Till the treacherous pen, to which he confided the  
secret,

Strove to betray it by singing and shouting the  
name of Priscilla!

Finally closing his book, with a bang of the ponder-  
ous cover,

Sudden and loud as the sound of a soldier ground-  
ing his musket,

Thus to the young man spake Miles Standish the  
Captain of Plymouth:

“When you have finished your work, I have some-  
thing important to tell you.

Be not, however, in haste; I can wait; I shall not be  
impatient!”

Straightway Alden replied, as he folded the last of  
his letters,

Pushing his papers aside, and giving respectful  
attention:

“Speak; for whenever you speak, I am always ready  
to listen,

Always ready to hear whatever pertains to Miles  
Standish.”

Thereupon answered the Captain, embarrassed, and  
culling his phrases:

“ ‘Tis not good for a man to be alone, say the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

This I have said before, and again and again I  
repeat it;

Every hour in the day, I think, and feel it, and  
say it.

Since Rose Standish died, my life has been weary  
and dreary;

Sick at heart have I been, beyond the healing of  
friendship.

Oft in my lonely hours have I thought of the maiden  
Priscilla.

She is alone in the world;<sup>2</sup> her father and mother  
and brother

Died in the winter together; I saw her going and  
coming,

Now to the grave of the dead, and now to the bed  
of the dying,

Patient, courageous, and strong, and said to my-  
self, that if ever

There were angels on earth, as there are angels in  
heaven,

Two have I seen and known; and the angel whose  
name is Priscilla

Holds in my desolate life the place which the other  
abandoned.

Long have I cherished the thought, but never have  
dared to reveal it,

Being a coward in this, though valiant enough for  
the most part.

Go to the damsel Priscilla, the loveliest maiden of  
Plymouth,

Say that a blunt old Captain, a man not of words  
but of actions,

Offers his hand and his heart, the hand and heart of  
a soldier.

Not in these words, you know, but this in short is  
my meaning;

I am a maker of war, and not a maker of phrases.

You, who are bred as a scholar, can say it in ele-  
gant language,

Such as you read in your books of the pleadings  
and wooings of lovers,

Such as you think best adapted to win the heart of  
a maiden."

When he had spoken, John Alden, the fair-haired,  
taciturn <sup>1</sup> stripling,

All aghast at his words, surprised, embarrassed,  
bewildered,

Trying to mask his dismay by treating the subject  
with lightness,

Trying to smile, and yet feeling his heart stand  
still in his bosom,

Just as a timepiece <sup>1</sup> stops in a house that is stricken  
by lightning,

Thus made answer and spake, or rather stammered  
than answered:

“Such a message as that, I am sure I should mangle  
and mar it;

If you would have it well done, — I am only repeat-  
ing your maxim,<sup>2</sup> —

You must do it yourself, you must not leave it to  
others!”

But with the air of a man whom nothing can turn  
from his purpose,

Gravely shaking his head, made answer the Captain  
of Plymouth:

“Truly the maxim is good, and I do not mean to  
gainsay it;

But we must use it discreetly, and not waste powder  
for nothing.

Now, as I said before, I was never a maker of  
phrases.

I can march up to a fortress and summon the place  
to surrender,

But march up to a woman with such a proposal, I  
dare not.

I'm not afraid of bullets, nor shot from the mouth  
of a cannon,

But of a thundering 'No!' point-blank from the  
mouth of a woman,

That, I confess, I'm afraid of, nor am I ashamed to  
confess it!

So you must grant my request, for you are an ele-  
gant scholar,

Having the graces of speech, and skill in the turning  
of phrases."

Taking the hand of his friend, who still was reluc-  
tant and doubtful,

Holding it long in his own, and pressing it kindly,  
he added:

"Though I have spoken thus lightly, yet deep is  
the feeling that prompts me;

Surely you cannot refuse what I ask in the name of  
our friendship!"

Then made answer John Alden: "The name of  
friendship is sacred;

What you demand in that name, I have not the  
power to deny you!"

So the strong will prevailed, subduing and molding  
the gentler,

Friendship prevailed over love, and Alden went on  
his errand.

## III

## THE LOVER'S ERRAND

So the strong will prevailed,<sup>1</sup> and Alden went on  
his errand,  
Out of the street of the village, and into the paths  
of the forest,  
Into the tranquil woods, where bluebirds and robins  
were building  
Towns in the populous trees, with hanging gardens <sup>2</sup>  
of verdure,  
Peaceful, aërial cities of joy and affection and free-  
dom.  
All around him was calm, but within him commo-  
tion and conflict,  
Love contending with friendship, and self with  
each generous impulse.  
To and fro in his breast his thoughts were heaving  
and dashing,  
As in a foundering ship, with every roll of the vessel,  
Washes the bitter sea, the merciless surge of the  
ocean!  
“Must I relinquish it all,” he cried with a wild  
lamentation,—  
“Must I relinquish it all, the joy, the hope, the  
illusion?

Was it for this I have loved, and waited, and worshiped in silence?

Was it for this I have followed the flying feet <sup>1</sup> and the shadow

Over the wintry sea, to the desolate shores of New England?

Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption

Rise, like an exhalation, the misty phantoms of passion;

Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.

All is clear to me now; I feel it, I see it distinctly!

This is the hand of the Lord; it is laid upon me in anger,

For I have followed too much the heart's desires and devices,

Worshiping Astaroth blindly, and impious idols of Baal.<sup>2</sup>

This is the cross I must bear; the sin and the swift retribution."

So through the Plymouth woods John Alden went on his errand;

Crossing the brook at the ford, where it brawled over pebble and shallow,

Gathering still, as he went, the mayflowers blooming around him,

Fragrant, filling the air with a strange and wonderful sweetness,

Children<sup>1</sup> lost in the woods, and covered with leaves in their slumber.

“Puritan flowers,” he said, “and the type of Puritan maidens,

Modest and simple and sweet, the very type of Priscilla!

So I will take them to her; to Priscilla the mayflower of Plymouth,

Modest and simple and sweet, as a parting gift will I take them;

Breathing their silent farewells, as they fade and wither and perish,

Soon to be thrown away as is the heart of the giver.”

So through the Plymouth woods John Alden went on his errand;

Came to an open space, and saw the disk of the ocean,

Sailless, somber and cold with the comfortless breath of the east wind;

Saw the new-built house, and people at work in a meadow;

Heard, as he drew near the door, the musical voice  
of Priscilla  
Singing the hundredth Psalm, the grand old Puritan anthem,  
Music that Luther sang to the sacred words of the Psalmist,  
Full of the breath of the Lord, consoling and comforting many.

Then, as he opened the door, he beheld the form  
of the maiden  
Seated beside her wheel, and the carded wool<sup>1</sup> like  
a snowdrift  
Piled at her knee, her white hands feeding the ravenous spindle,  
While with her foot on the treadle she guided the wheel in its motion.

Open wide on her lap lay the well-worn psalm-book of Ainsworth,  
Printed in Amsterdam, the words and the music together,  
Rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in the wall of a churchyard,  
Darkened and overhung by the running vine of the verses.

Such was the book from whose pages she sang the old Puritan anthem,<sup>2</sup>

She, the Puritan girl, in the solitude of the forest,

Making the humble house and the modest apparel  
of homespun

Beautiful with her beauty, and rich with the wealth  
of her being!

Over him rushed, like a wind that is keen and cold  
and relentless,

Thoughts of what might have been, and the weight  
and woe of his errand;

All the dreams that had faded, and all the hopes  
that had vanished,

All his life<sup>1</sup> henceforth a dreary and tenantless  
mansion,

Haunted by vain regrets, and pallid, sorrowful  
faces.

Still he said to himself, and almost fiercely he said it,  
“Let not him that putteth his hand to the plow<sup>2</sup>  
look backwards;

Though the plowshare cut through the flowers of  
life to its fountains,

Though it pass o'er the graves of the dead and the  
hearts of the living,

It is the will of the Lord; and his mercy endureth  
forever!”<sup>3</sup>

So he entered the house; and the hum of the  
wheel and the singing

Suddenly ceased; for Priscilla, aroused by his step  
on the threshold,  
Rose as he entered, and gave him her hand, in  
signal of welcome,  
Saying, "I knew it was you, when I heard your  
step in the passage;  
For I was thinking of you, as I sat there singing  
and spinning."  
Awkward and dumb with delight, that a thought  
of him had been mingled  
Thus in the sacred psalm, that came from the heart  
of the maiden,  
Silent before her he stood, and gave her the flowers  
for an answer,  
Finding no words for his thought. He remem-  
bered that day in the winter,  
After the first great snow, when he broke a path  
from the village,  
Reeling and plunging along through the drifts that  
encumbered the doorway,  
Stamping the snow from his feet as he entered the  
house, and Priscilla  
Laughed at his snowy locks, and gave him a seat  
by the fireside,  
Grateful and pleased to know he had thought of  
her in the snow-storm.

Had he but spoken then perhaps not in vain had  
he spoken!

Now it was all too late; the golden moment had  
vanished!

So he stood there abashed, and gave her the flowers  
for an answer.

Then they sat down and talked of the birds and  
the beautiful springtime;

Talked of their friends at home, and the Mayflower  
that sailed on the morrow.

“I have been thinking all day,” said gently the  
Puritan maiden,

“Dreaming all night, and thinking all day, of the  
hedgerows of England,—

They are in blossom now, and the country is all  
like a garden;

Thinking of lanes and fields, and the song of the  
lark and the linnet,

Seeing the village street, and familiar faces of  
neighbors

Going about as of old, and stopping to gossip to-  
gether,

And, at the end of the street, the village church,  
with the ivy

Climbing the old gray tower, and the quiet graves  
in the churchyard.

Kind are the people I live with, and dear to me my religion;

Still my heart is so sad, that I wish myself back in Old England.

You will say it is wrong, but I cannot help it: I almost

Wish myself back in Old England, I feel so lonely and wretched."

Thereupon answered the youth: "Indeed I do not condemn you;

Stouter hearts than a woman's have quailed in this terrible winter.

Yours is tender and trusting, and needs a stronger to lean on;

So I have come to you now, with an offer and proffer of marriage

Made by a good man and true, Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth!"

Thus he delivered his message, the dexterous writer of letters, —

Did not embellish the theme, nor array it in beautiful phrases,

But came straight to the point, and blurted it out like a schoolboy;

Even the Captain himself could hardly have said it more bluntly.

Mute with amazement and sorrow, Priscilla the Puritan maiden

Looked into Alden's face, her eyes dilated with wonder,

Feeling his words like a blow, that stunned her and rendered her speechless;

Till at length she exclaimed, interrupting the ominous silence:

“If the great Captain of Plymouth is so very eager to wed me,

Why does he not come himself, and take the trouble to woo me?

If I am not worth the wooing, I surely am not worth the winning!”

Then John Alden began explaining and smoothing the matter,

Making it worse as he went, by saying the Captain was busy, —

Had no time for such things; — such things! the words grating harshly

Fell on the ear of Priscilla; and swift as a flash she made answer:

“Has he no time for such things, as you call it, before he is married,

Would he be likely to find it, or make it, after the wedding?

That is the way with you men; you don't understand us, you cannot.

When you have made up your minds, after thinking of this one and that one,

Choosing, selecting, rejecting, comparing one with another,

Then you make known your desire, with abrupt and sudden avowal,

And are offended and hurt, and indignant perhaps, that a woman

Does not respond at once to a love that she never suspected,

Does not attain at a bound to the height to which you have been climbing.

This is not right nor just; for surely a woman's affection

Is not a thing to be asked for, and had for only the asking.

When one is truly in love, one not only says it, but shows it.

Had he but waited a while, had he only showed that he loved me,

Even this Captain of yours — who knows? — at last might have won me,

Old and rough as he is; but now it never can happen."

Still John Alden went on, unheeding the words  
of Priscilla,  
Urging the suit of his friend, explaining, persuad-  
ing, expanding;  
Spoke of his courage and skill, and of all his battles  
in Flanders,  
How with the people of God he had chosen to suffer  
affliction,  
How, in return for his zeal, they had made him  
Captain of Plymouth;  
He was a gentleman born, could trace his pedigree  
plainly  
Back to Hugh Standish<sup>1</sup> of Duxbury Hall, in Lan-  
cashire, England,  
Who was the son of Ralph, and the grandson of  
Thurston de Standish;  
Heir unto vast estates, of which he was basely  
defrauded,  
Still bore the family arms,<sup>2</sup> and had for his crest a  
cock argent  
Combed and wattled gules, and all the rest of the  
blazon.  
He was a man of honor, of noble and generous  
nature;

Though he was rough, he was kindly; she knew  
    how during the winter  
He had attended the sick, with a hand as gentle  
    as woman's;  
Somewhat hasty and hot, he could not deny it,  
    and headstrong,  
Stern as a soldier might be, but hearty, and placable  
    always,  
Not to be laughed at and scorned, because he was  
    little of stature;  
For he was great of heart, magnanimous, courtly,  
    courageous;  
Any woman in Plymouth, nay, any woman in  
    England,  
Might be happy and proud to be called the wife of  
    Miles Standish!

But as he warmed and glowed, in his simple  
    and eloquent language,  
Quite forgetful of self, and full of the praise of his  
    rival,  
Archly the maiden smiled, and, with eyes over-  
    running with laughter,  
Said, in a tremulous voice, “Why don't you speak  
    for yourself, John?”<sup>1</sup>

## IV

JOHN ALDEN

Into the open air John Alden,<sup>1</sup> perplexed and bewildered,

Rushed like a man insane, and wandered alone by the seaside;

Paced up and down the sands, and bared his head to the east wind,

Cooling his heated brow, and the fire and fever within him.

Slowly, as out of the heavens, with apocalyptic splendors,<sup>2</sup>

Sank the City of God, in the vision of John the Apostle;

So, with its cloudy walls of chrysolite, jasper, and sapphire,

Sank the broad red sun, and over its turrets uplifted

Glimmered the golden reed of the angel who measured the city.

“Welcome, O wind of the East!” he exclaimed in his wild exultation,

“Welcome, O wind of the East, from the caves of the misty Atlantic!

Blowing o'er fields of dulse,<sup>1</sup> and measureless  
meadows of seagrass,

Blowing o'er rocky wastes, and the grottoes and  
gardens of ocean!

Lay thy cold, moist hand on my burning forehead,  
and wrap me

Close in thy garments of mist, to allay the fever  
within me!"

Like an awakened conscience, the sea was moan-  
ing and tossing,

Beating remorseful and loud the mutable sands of  
the seashore.

Fierce in his soul was the struggle and tumult of  
passions contending;

Love triumphant and crowned, and friendship  
wounded and bleeding,

Passionate cries of desire, and importunate plead-  
ings of duty!

"Is it my fault," he said, "that the maiden has  
chosen between us?

Is it my fault that he failed, — my fault that I am  
the victor?"

Then within him there thundered a voice, like the  
voice of the Prophet:

"It hath displeased the Lord!" — and he thought  
of David's transgression,<sup>2</sup>

Bathsheba's beautiful face, and his friend in the front of the battle!

Shame and confusion of guilt, and abasement and self-condemnation,

Overwhelmed him at once; and he cried in the deepest contrition:

*“It hath displeased the Lord! It is the temptation of Satan!”*

Then, uplifting his head, he looked at the sea, and beheld there

Dimly the shadowy form of the Mayflower riding at anchor,

Rocked on the rising tide, and ready to sail on the morrow;

Heard the voices of men through the mist, the rattle of cordage

Thrown on the deck, the shouts of the mate, and the sailors' "Aye, aye, sir!"

Clear and distinct, but not loud, in the dripping air of the twilight.

Still for a moment he stood, and listened, and stared at the vessel,

Then went hurriedly on, as one who, seeing a phantom,

Stops, then quickens his pace, and follows the beckoning shadow.

“Yes, it is plain to me now,” he murmured; “the hand of the Lord is Leading me out of the land of darkness, the bondage of error, Through the sea, that shall lift the walls of its waters<sup>1</sup> around me, Hiding me, cutting me off, from the cruel thoughts that pursue me. Back will I go o'er the ocean, this dreary land will abandon, Her<sup>2</sup> whom I may not love, and him whom my heart has offended. Better to be in my grave in the green old church-yard in England, Close by my mother's side, and among the dust of my kindred; Better be dead and forgotten, than living in shame and dishonor! Sacred and safe and unseen, in the dark of the narrow chamber With me my secret shall lie, like a buried jewel that glimmers Bright on the hand that is dust, in the chambers of silence and darkness, — Yes, as the marriage ring of the great espousal hereafter!”

Thus as he spake, he turned, in the strength of  
his strong resolution,  
Leaving behind him the shore, and hurried along  
in the twilight,  
Through the congenial gloom of the forest silent  
and somber,  
Till he beheld the lights on the seven houses<sup>1</sup> of  
Plymouth,  
Shining like seven stars in the dusk and mist of  
the evening.  
Soon he entered his door, and found the redoubt-  
able Captain  
Sitting alone, and absorbed in the martial pages  
of Cæsar,  
Fighting some great campaign in Hainault or Bra-  
bant<sup>2</sup> or Flanders.  
“Long have you been on your errand,” he said with  
a cheery demeanor,  
Even as one who is waiting an answer, and fears  
not the issue.  
“Not far off is the house, although the woods are  
between us;  
But you have lingered so long, that while you  
were going and coming  
I have fought ten battles and sacked and demol-  
ished a city.

Come, sit down, and in order relate to me all that  
has happened."

Then John Alden spake, and related the won-  
drous adventure

From beginning to end, minutely, just as it happened;  
How he had seen Priscilla, and how he had sped <sup>1</sup>  
in his courtship,

Only smoothing a little, and softening down her  
refusal,

But when he came at length to the words Priscilla  
had spoken,

Words so tender and cruel: "Why don't you speak  
for yourself, John?"

Up leaped the Captain of Plymouth, and stamped  
on the floor, till his armor

Clanged on the wall, where it hung, with a sound  
of sinister omen.

All his pent-up wrath burst forth in a sudden ex-  
plosion,

E'en as a hand-grenade, that scatters destruction  
around it.

Wildly he shouted, and loud: "John Alden! you  
have betrayed me!"

Me, Miles Standish, your friend! have supplanted,  
defrauded, betrayed me!

One of my ancestors ran his sword through the  
heart of Wat Tyler;<sup>1</sup>  
Who shall prevent me from running my own through  
the heart of a traitor?  
Yours is the greater treason, for yours is a treason  
to friendship!  
You, who lived under my roof, whom I cherished  
and loved as a brother;  
You, who have fed at my board, and drunk at my  
cup, to whose keeping  
I have intrusted my honor, my thoughts the most  
sacred and secret, —  
You too, Brutus!<sup>2</sup> ah, woe to the name of friendship  
hereafter!  
Brutus was Cæsar's friend, and you were mine, but  
henceforward  
Let there be nothing between us save war, and im-  
placable hatred!"

So spake the Captain of Plymouth, and strode  
about in the chamber,  
Chafing and choking with rage; like cords were the  
veins on his temples.  
But in the midst of his anger a man appeared at  
the doorway,  
Bringing in uttermost haste a message of urgent  
importance,

Rumors of danger and war and hostile incursions  
of Indians!

Straightway the Captain paused, and, without  
further question or parley,  
Took from the nail on the wall his sword with its  
scabbard of iron,

Buckled the belt round his waist, and, frowning  
fiercely, departed.

Alden was left alone.<sup>1</sup> He heard the clank of the  
scabbard

Growing fainter and fainter, and dying away in  
the distance.

Then he arose from his seat, and looked forth into  
the darkness,

Felt the cool air blow on his cheek, that was hot  
with the insult,

Lifted his eyes to the heavens, and, folding his  
hands as in childhood,

Prayed in the silence of night to the Father who  
seeth in secret.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the choleric Captain strode wrathful  
away to the council,

Found it already assembled, impatiently waiting  
his coming;

Men in the middle of life, austere and grave in de-  
portment,

Only one of them old, the hill<sup>1</sup> that was nearest  
to heaven,  
Covered with snow, but erect, the excellent Elder  
of Plymouth.  
God had sifted three kingdoms to find the wheat  
for this planting,  
Then had sifted the wheat, as the living seed of a  
nation;  
So say the chronicles old,<sup>2</sup> and such is the faith of  
the people!  
Near them was standing an Indian, in attitude  
stern and defiant,  
Naked down to the waist, and grim and ferocious  
in aspect;  
While on the table before them was lying unopened  
a Bible,  
Ponderous, bound in leather, brass-studded, printed  
in Holland,  
And beside it outstretched the skin<sup>3</sup> of a rattle-  
snake glittered,  
Filled, like a quiver, with arrows: a signal and  
challenge of warfare,  
Brought by the Indian, and speaking with arrowy  
tongues of defiance.  
This Miles Standish beheld, as he entered, and  
heard them debating

What were an answer befitting the hostile message  
and menace,  
Talking of this and of that, contriving, suggesting,  
objecting;  
One voice only for peace, and that the voice of the  
Elder,<sup>1</sup>  
Judging it wise and well that some at least were  
converted,  
Rather than any were slain, for this was but Chris-  
tian behavior!  
Then out spake Miles Standish, the stalwart Cap-  
tain of Plymouth,  
Muttering deep in his throat, for his voice was husky  
with anger,  
“What! do you mean to make war with milk and  
the water of roses?  
Is it to shoot red squirrels you have your howitzer  
planted  
There on the roof of the church, or is it to shoot  
red devils?  
Truly the only tongue that is understood by a  
savage  
Must be the tongue of fire that speaks from the  
mouth of the cannon!”  
Thereupon answered and said the excellent Elder  
of Plymouth,

Somewhat amazed and alarmed at this irreverent language:

“Not so thought Saint Paul, nor yet the other Apostles;

Not from the cannon’s mouth were the tongues of fire they spake with!”

But unheeded fell this mild rebuke on the Captain, Who had advanced to the table, and thus continued discoursing:

“Leave this matter to me, for to me by right it pertaineth.

War is a terrible trade; but in the cause that is righteous,

Sweet is the smell of powder; and thus I answer the challenge!”

Then from the rattlesnake’s skin, with a sudden, contemptuous gesture,

Jerking the Indian arrows, he filled it with powder and bullets

Full to the very jaws, and handed it back to the savage,

Saying, in thundering tones: “Here, take it! this is your answer!”

Silently out of the room then glided the glistening savage,

Bearing the serpent's skin, and seeming himself  
like a serpent,  
Winding his sinuous way in the dark to the depths  
of the forest.

## V

## THE SAILING OF THE MAYFLOWER

Just in the gray of the dawn, as the mists uprose  
from the meadows,  
There was a stir and a sound <sup>1</sup> in the slumbering  
village of Plymouth;  
Clanging and clicking of arms, and the order imper-  
ative, "Forward!"  
Given in tone suppressed, a tramp of feet, and then  
silence.  
Figures ten, in the mist, marched slowly out of the  
village.  
Standish the stalwart it was, with eight of his valor-  
ous army,  
Led by their Indian guide, by Hobomok, friend of  
the white men,  
Northward marching to quell the sudden revolt of  
the savage.  
Giants they seemed in the mist, or the mighty men  
of King David;<sup>2</sup>

Giants in heart they were, who believed in God  
and the Bible, —

Aye, who believed in the smiting of Midianites and  
Philistines.

Over them gleamed far off the crimson banners of  
morning;

Under them loud on the sands, the serried <sup>1</sup> billows,  
advancing,

Fired along the line, and in regular order retreated.

Many a mile had they marched, when at length  
the village of Plymouth

Woke from its sleep, and arose, intent on its mani-  
fold labors.

Sweet was the air and soft; and slowly the smoke  
from the chimneys

Rose over roofs of thatch, and pointed steadily  
eastward;

Men came forth from the doors, and paused and  
talked of the weather;

Said that the wind had changed, and was blowing  
fair for the Mayflower;

Talked of their Captain's departure, and all the  
dangers that menaced,

He being gone, the town, and what should be done  
in his absence.

Merrily sang the birds, and the tender voices of  
women  
Consecrated with hymns the common cares of the  
household.  
Out of the sea rose the sun, and the billows re-  
joiced at his coming;  
Beautiful were his feet<sup>1</sup> on the purple tops of the  
mountains;  
Beautiful on the sails of the Mayflower riding at  
anchor,  
Battered and blackened and worn by all the storms  
of the winter.  
Loosely against her masts was hanging and flap-  
ping her canvas,  
Rent by so many gales, and patched by the hands  
of the sailors.  
Suddenly from her side, as the sun rose over the  
ocean,  
Darted a puff of smoke, and floated seaward; anon  
rang  
Loud over field and forest the cannon's roar, and  
the echoes  
Heard and repeated the sound, the signal-gun of  
departure!  
Ah! but with louder echoes replied the hearts of  
the people!

Meekly, in voices subdued, the chapter was read  
from the Bible,

Meekly the prayer was begun, but ended in fervent  
entreathy!

Then from their houses in haste came forth the  
Pilgrims of Plymouth,

Men and women and children, all hurrying down  
to the seashore,

Eager, with tearful eyes, to say farewell to the  
Mayflower,

Homeward bound o'er the sea, and leaving them  
here in the desert.<sup>1</sup>

Foremost among them was Alden. All night he  
had lain without slumber,

Turning and tossing about in the heat and unrest  
of his fever.

He had beheld Miles Standish, who came back late  
from the council,

Stalking into the room, and heard him mutter and  
murmur,

Sometimes it seemed a prayer, and sometimes it  
sounded like swearing.

Once he had come to the bed, and stood there a  
moment in silence;

Then he had turned away, and said: "I will not  
awake him;

Let him sleep on, it is best; for what is the use of more talking!"

Then he extinguished the light, and threw himself down on his pallet,

Dressed as he was, and ready to start at the break of the morning, —

Covered himself with the cloak he had worn in his campaigns in Flanders, —

Slept as a soldier sleeps in his bivouac, ready for action.

But with the dawn he arose; in the twilight Alden beheld him

Put on his corselet of steel, and all the rest of his armor,

Buckle about his waist his trusty blade of Damascus,

Take from the corner his musket, and so stride out of the chamber.

Often the heart of the youth had burned and yearned to embrace him,

Often his lips had essayed to speak, imploring for pardon;

All the old friendship came back with its tender and grateful emotions;

But his pride overmastered the nobler nature within him, —

Pride, and the sense of his wrong, and the burning  
fire of the insult.

So he beheld his friend departing in anger, but  
spake not,

Saw him go forth to danger, perhaps to death, and  
he spake<sup>1</sup> not!

Then he arose from his bed, and heard what the  
people were saying,

Joined in the talk at the door, with Stephen and  
Richard and Gilbert,<sup>2</sup>

Joined in the morning prayer, and in the reading  
of Scripture,

And, with the others, in haste went hurrying down  
to the seashore,

Down to the Plymouth Rock,<sup>3</sup> that had been to  
their feet as a doorstep

Into a world unknown,—the corner stone of a nation!

There with his boat was the Master,<sup>4</sup> already a  
little impatient

Lest he should lose the tide, or the wind might  
shift to the eastward,

Square-built, hearty, and strong, with an odor of  
ocean about him,

Speaking with this one and that, and cramming  
letters and parcels

Into his pockets capacious, and messages mingled together

Into his narrow brain, till at last he was wholly bewildered.

Nearer the boat stood Alden, with one foot placed on the gunwale,<sup>1</sup>

One still firm on the rock, and talking at times with the sailors,

Seated erect on the thwarts, all ready and eager for starting.

He too was eager to go, and thus put an end to his anguish,

Thinking to fly from despair, that swifter than keel is or canvas,

Thinking to drown in the sea the ghost that would rise and pursue him.

But as he gazed on the crowd, he beheld the form of Priscilla

Standing dejected among them, unconscious of all that was passing.

Fixed were her eyes upon his, as if she divined his intention,

Fixed with a look so sad, so reproachful, imploring, and patient,

That with a sudden revulsion his heart recoiled from its purpose,

As from the verge of a crag, where one step more is  
destruction.

Strange is the heart of man, with its quick, mys-  
terious instincts!

Strange is the life of man, and fatal or fated are  
moments,

Whereupon turn, as on hinges, the gates of the wall  
adamantine!

“Here I remain!”<sup>1</sup> he exclaimed, as he looked at the  
heavens above him,

Thanking the Lord whose breath had scattered the  
mist and the madness,

Wherein, blind and lost, to death he was stagger-  
ing headlong.

“Yonder snow-white cloud, that floats in the ether  
above me,

Seems like a hand that is pointing and beckoning  
over the ocean.

There is another hand, that is not so spectral and  
ghost-like,

Holding me, drawing me back, and clasping mine  
for protection.

Float, O hand of cloud, and vanish away in the  
ether!

Roll thyself up like a fist, to threaten and daunt  
me; I heed not

Either your warning or menace, or any omen of  
evil!

There is no land so sacred, no air so pure and so  
wholesome,

As is the air she breathes, and the soil that is pressed  
by her footsteps.

Here for her sake will I stay, and like an invisible  
presence

Hover around her forever, protecting, supporting  
her weakness;

Yes! as my foot was the first that stepped on this  
rock at the landing,

So, with the blessing of God, shall it be the last at  
the leaving!"

Meanwhile the Master alert, but with dignified  
air and important,

Scanning with watchful eye the tide and the wind  
and the weather,

Walked about on the sands, and the people crowded  
around him

Saying a few last words, and enforcing his careful  
remembrance.

Then, taking each by the hand, as if he were grasp-  
ing a tiller,

Into the boat he sprang, and in haste shoved off  
to his vessel.

Glad in his heart to get rid of all this worry and  
flurry,

Glad to be gone from a land of sand and sickness  
and sorrow,

Short allowance of victual, and plenty of nothing  
but Gospel!

Lost in the sound of oars was the last farewell of  
the Pilgrims.

O strong hearts and true! not one went back in the  
Mayflower!

No, not one looked back, who had set his hand<sup>1</sup> to  
this plowing!

Soon were heard on board the shouts and songs  
of the sailors

Heaving the windlass round, and hoisting the pon-  
derous anchor.

Then the yards were braced, and all sails set to the  
west wind,

Blowing steady and strong; and the Mayflower  
sailed from the harbor,

Rounded the point of the Gurnet,<sup>2</sup> and leaving far  
to the southward

Island and cape of sand, and the Field of the First  
Encounter,<sup>3</sup>

Took the wind on her quarter, and stood for the  
open Atlantic,

Borne on the send of the sea, and the swelling  
hearts of the Pilgrims.

Long in silence they watched the receding sail  
of the vessel,

Much endeared to them all, as something living  
and human;

Then, as if filled with the spirit, and wrapt in a  
vision prophetic,

Baring his hoary head, the excellent Elder of  
Plymouth

Said, "Let us pray!" and they prayed, and thanked  
the Lord and took courage.<sup>1</sup>

Mournfully sobbed the waves at the base of the  
rock, and above them

Bowed and whispered the wheat on the hill of  
death, and their kindred

Seemed to awake in their graves, and to join in the  
prayer that they uttered.

Sun-illumined and white, on the eastern verge of  
the ocean

Gleamed the departing sail, like a marble slab in a  
graveyard;

Buried beneath it lay forever all hope of escaping.

Lo! as they turned to depart, they saw the form of  
an Indian,

Watching them from the hill; but while they spake  
with each other,  
Pointing with outstretched hands, and saying,  
“Look!” he had vanished.  
So they returned to their homes; but Alden lingered a little,  
Musing alone on the shore, and watching the wash  
of the billows  
Round the base of the rock, and the sparkle and  
flash of the sunshine,  
Like the spirit of God,<sup>1</sup> moving visibly over the  
waters.

## VI

## PRISCILLA

Thus for a while he stood, and mused by the  
shore of the ocean,  
Thinking of many things, and most of all of Pris-  
cilla;  
And as if thought had the power to draw to itself,  
like the loadstone,  
Whatsoever it touches, by subtle laws of its  
nature,  
Lo! as he turned to depart, Priscilla was standing  
beside him.



*From the painting by G.H. Boughton*

**The Return of the Mayflower**

“Are you so much offended, you will not speak to me?” said she.

“Am I so much to blame, that yesterday, when you were pleading

Warmly the cause of another, my heart, impulsive and wayward,

Pleaded your own, and spake out, forgetful perhaps of decorum?

Certainly you can forgive me for speaking so frankly, for saying

What I ought not to have said, yet now I can never unsay it;

For there are moments in life, when the heart is so full of emotion,

That if by chance it be shaken, or into its depths like a pebble

Drops some careless word, it overflows, and its secret,

Spilt on the ground like water, can never be gathered together.

Yesterday I was shocked, when I heard you speak of Miles Standish,

Praising his virtues, transforming his very defects into virtues,

Praising his courage and strength, and even his fighting in Flanders.

As if by fighting alone you could win the heart of a woman,

Quite overlooking yourself and the rest, in exalting your hero.

Therefore I spake as I did, by an irresistible impulse. You will forgive me, I hope, for the sake of the friendship between us,

Which is too true and too sacred to be so easily broken!"

Thereupon answered John Alden, the scholar, the friend of Miles Standish:

"I was not angry with you, with myself alone I was angry,

Seeing how badly I managed the matter I had in my keeping."

"No!"<sup>1</sup> interrupted the maiden, with answer prompt and decisive;

"No; you were angry with me, for speaking so frankly and freely.

It was wrong, I acknowledge; for it is the fate of a woman

Long to be patient and silent, to wait like a ghost that is speechless,

Till some questioning voice dissolves the spell of its silence.

Hence is the inner life of so many suffering women

Sunless and silent and deep, like subterranean  
rivers

Running through caverns of darkness, unheard,  
unseen, and unfruitful,

Chafing their channels of stone, with endless and  
profitless murmurs."

Thereupon answered John Alden, the young man,  
the lover of women:

"Heaven forbid it, Priscilla; and truly they seem  
to me always

More like the beautiful rivers<sup>1</sup> that watered the  
garden of Eden,

More like the river Euphrates, through deserts of  
Havilah flowing,

Filling the land with delight, and memories sweet  
of the garden!"

"Ah, by these words, I can see," again interrupted  
the maiden,

"How very little you prize me, or care for what I  
am saying.

When from the depths of my heart, in pain and  
with secret misgiving,

Frankly I speak to you, asking for sympathy only  
and kindness,

Straightway you take up my words, that are plain  
and direct and in earnest,

Turn them away from their meaning, and answer  
with flattering phrases.

This is not right, is not just, is not true to the best  
that is in you;

For I know and esteem you, and feel that your  
nature is noble,

Lifting mine up to a higher, a more ethereal level.

Therefore I value your friendship, and feel it per-  
haps the more keenly

If you say aught that implies I am only as one  
among many,

If you make use of those common and compli-  
mentary phrases

Most men think so fine, in dealing and speaking  
with women,

But which women reject as insipid, if not as in-  
sulting."

Mute and amazed was Alden; and listened and  
looked at Priscilla,

Thinking he never had seen her more fair, more  
divine in her beauty.

He who but yesterday pleaded so glibly the cause  
of another,

Stood there embarrassed and silent, and seeking in  
vain for an answer.

So the maiden went on, and little divined or imagined

What was at work in his heart, that made him so awkward and speechless.

“Let us, then, be what we are, and speak what we think, and in all things

Keep ourselves loyal to truth, and the sacred professions of friendship.

It is no secret I tell you, nor am I ashamed to declare it:

I have liked to be with you, to see you, to speak with you always.

So I was hurt at your words, and a little affronted to hear you

Urge me to marry your friend, though he were the Captain Miles Standish.

For I must tell you the truth: much more to me is your friendship

Than all the love he could give, were he twice the hero you think him.”

Then she extended her hand, and Alden, who eagerly grasped it,

Felt all the wounds in his heart, that were aching and bleeding so sorely,

Healed by the touch of that hand, and he said, with a voice full of feeling:

“Yes, we must ever be friends; and of all who offer  
you friendship

Let me be e'er the first, the truest, the nearest and  
dearest!”

Casting a farewell look at the glimmering sail of  
the Mayflower

Distant, but still in sight, and sinking below the  
horizon,

Homeward together they walked, with a strange,  
indefinite feeling,

That all the rest had departed and left them alone  
in the desert.

But, as they went through the fields in the blessing  
and smile of the sunshine,

Lighter grew their hearts, and Priscilla said very  
archly:

“Now that our terrible Captain has gone in pursuit  
of the Indians,

Where he is happier far than he would be command-  
ing a household,

You may speak boldly, and tell me of all that  
happened between you,

When you returned last night, and said how un-  
grateful you found me.”

Thereupon answered John Alden, and told her the  
whole of the story, —

Told her his own despair, and the direful wrath <sup>1</sup> of  
Miles Standish.

Whereat the maiden smiled, and said between  
laughing and earnest,

“He is a little chimney, and heated hot in a mo-  
ment!”

But as he gently rebuked her, and told her how  
much he had suffered, —

How he had even determined to sail that day in the  
Mayflower,

And remained for her sake, on hearing the dangers  
that threatened, —

All her manner was changed,<sup>2</sup> and she said with a  
faltering accent,

“Truly I thank you for this: how good you have  
been to me always!”

Thus, as a pilgrim devout, who toward Jerusalem  
journeys,

Taking three steps in advance, and one reluctantly  
backward,

Urged by importunate zeal, and withheld by pangs  
of contrition;

Slowly but steadily onward, receding yet ever  
advancing,

Journeyed this Puritan youth to the Holy Land <sup>3</sup>  
of his longings,

Urged by the fervor of love, and withheld by remorseful misgivings.

VII

THE MARCH OF MILES STANDISH

Meanwhile the stalwart Miles Standish was marching steadily northward,  
Winding through forest and swamp, and along the trend of the seashore,  
All day long, with hardly a halt, the fire of his anger  
Burning and crackling within, and the sulphurous odor of powder  
Seeming more sweet to his nostrils than all the scents of the forest.  
Silent and moody he went, and much he revolved his discomfort;  
He who was used to success, and to easy victories always,  
Thus to be flouted, rejected, and laughed to scorn by a maiden,  
Thus to be mocked and betrayed by the friend whom most he had trusted!  
Ah! 'twas too much to be borne, and he fretted and chafed in his armor!

"I alone am to blame," he muttered, "for mine  
was the folly.

What has a rough old soldier, grown grim and gray  
in the harness,

Used to the camp and its ways, to do with the  
wooing of maidens?

'Twas but a dream,—let it pass,—let it vanish  
like so many others!

What I thought was a flower, is only a weed, and is  
worthless;

Out of my heart will I pluck it, and throw it away,  
and henceforward

Be but a fighter of battles, a lover and wooer of  
dangers!"

Thus he revolved in his mind his sorry defeat and  
discomfort,

While he was marching by day or lying at night in  
the forest,

Looking up at the trees and the constellations  
beyond them.

After a three days' march he came to an Indian  
encampment

Pitched on the edge of a meadow, between the sea  
and the forest;

Women at work by the tents, and the warriors,  
horrid with warpaint,

Seated about a fire, and smoking and talking together;

Who, when they saw from afar the sudden approach of the white men,

Saw the flash of the sun on breastplate and saber and musket,

Straightway leaped to their feet, and two, from among them advancing,

Came to parley with Standish, and offer him furs as a present;

Friendship was<sup>1</sup> in their looks, but in their hearts there was hatred.

Braves of the tribe were these, and brothers, gigantic in stature,

Huge as Goliath of Gath, or the terrible Og,<sup>2</sup> king of Bashan;

One was Pecksuot named, and the other was called Wattawamat.

Round their necks were suspended their knives in scabbards of wampum,<sup>3</sup>

Two-edged, trenchant knives, with points as sharp as a needle.

Other arms had they none, for they were cunning and crafty.

“Welcome, English!” they said, — these words they had learned from the traders

Touching at times on the coast, to barter and  
chaffer for peltries.

Then in their native tongue they began to parley  
with Standish,

Through his guide and interpreter, Hobomok, friend  
of the white man,

Begging for blankets and knives, but mostly for  
muskets and powder,

Kept by the white man, they said, concealed, with  
the plague, in his cellars,

Ready to be let loose, and destroy his brother the  
red man!

But when Standish refused, and said he would give  
them the Bible,

Suddenly changing their tone, they began to boast  
and to bluster.

Then Wattawamat<sup>1</sup> advanced with a stride in  
front of the other,

And, with a lofty demeanor, thus vauntingly spake  
to the Captain:

“Now Wattawamat can see, by the fiery eyes of  
the Captain,

Angry is he in his heart; but the heart of the brave  
Wattawamat

Is not afraid at the sight. He was not born of a  
woman,

But on a mountain, at night, from an oak-tree riven  
by lightning,

Forth he sprang at a bound, with all his weapons  
about him,

Shouting, 'Who is there here to fight with the  
brave Wattawamat?'"

Then he unsheathed his knife, and, whetting the  
blade on his left hand,

Held it aloft and displayed a woman's face on the  
handle,

Saying, with bitter expression and look of sinister  
meaning:

"I have another at home, with the face of a man  
on the handle;

By and by they shall marry; and there will be  
plenty of children!"

Then stood Pecksuot forth, self-vaunting, in-  
sulting Miles Standish;

While with his fingers he patted the knife that hung  
at his bosom,

Drawing it half from its sheath, and plunging it  
back, as he muttered,

"By and by it shall see; it shall eat; ah, ha! but  
shall speak not!

This is the mighty Captain the white men have sent  
to destroy us!

He is a little man; let him go and work with the women!"

Meanwhile Standish had noted the faces and figures of Indians

Peeping and creeping about from bush to tree in the forest,

Feigning to look for game, with arrows set on their bow-strings,

Drawing about him still closer and closer the net of their ambush.

But undaunted he stood, and dissembled and treated them smoothly;

So the old chronicles say, that were writ in the days of the fathers.

But when he heard their defiance, the boast, the taunt, and the insult,

All the hot blood of his race, of Sir Hugh and of Thurston de Standish,

Boiled and beat in his heart, and swelled in the veins of his temples.

Headlong he leaped on the boaster,<sup>1</sup> and, snatching his knife from its scabbard,

Plunged it into his heart, and, reeling backward, the savage

Fell with his face to the sky, and a fiendlike fierceness npon it.

Straight there arose from the forest the awful sound  
of the war-whoop,

And, like a flurry of snow on the whistling wind of  
December,

Swift and sudden and keen came a flight of feathery  
arrows.

Then came a cloud of smoke, and out of the cloud  
came the lightning,

Out of the lightning thunder;<sup>1</sup> and death unseen  
ran before it.

Frightened, the savages fled for shelter in swamp  
and in thicket,

Hotly pursued and beset; but their sachem, the  
brave Wattawamat,

Fled not; he was dead. Unswerving and swift had  
a bullet

Passed through his brain, and he fell with both  
hands clutching the greensward,

Seeming in death to hold back from his foe the land  
of his fathers.

There on the flowers of the meadow the warriors  
lay, and above them

Silent, with folded arms, stood Hobomok,<sup>2</sup> friend of  
the white man.

Smiling at length he exclaimed to the stalwart  
Captain of Plymouth:

“Pecksuot bragged very loud, of his courage, his strength, and his stature, —  
Mocked the great Captain, and called him a little man; but I see now Big enough have you been to lay him speechless before you!”

Thus the first battle was fought and won by the stalwart Miles Standish.

When the tidings thereof were brought to the village of Plymouth,  
And as a trophy of war the head of the brave Wat-tawamat

Scowled from the roof of the fort, which at once was a church and a fortress,

All who beheld it rejoiced, and praised the Lord, and took courage.

Only Priscilla averted her face from this specter of terror,

Thanking God in her heart that she had not married Miles Standish;

Shrinking, fearing almost, lest, coming home from his battles,

He should lay claim to her hand, as the prize and reward of his valor.

## VIII

## THE SPINNING WHEEL

Month after month passed away, and in autumn  
the ships of the merchants  
Came<sup>1</sup> with kindreds and friends, with cattle and  
corn for the Pilgrims.  
All in the village was peace; the men were intent on  
their labors,  
Busy with hewing and building, with garden plot  
and with merestead,  
Busy with breaking the glebe, and mowing the  
grass in the meadows,  
Searching the sea for its fish, and hunting the deer  
in the forest.  
All in the village was peace; but at times the rumor  
of warfare  
Filled the air with alarm, and the apprehension of  
danger.  
Bravely the stalwart Miles Standish was scouring  
the land with his forces,  
Waxing valiant in fight<sup>2</sup> and defeating the alien  
armies,  
Till his name had become a sound of fear to the  
nations.

Anger was still in his heart, but at times the remorse and contrition  
Which in all noble natures succeed the passionate outbreak,  
Came like a rising tide, that encounters the rush of a river,  
Staying its current a while, but making it bitter and brackish.

Meanwhile Alden at home had built him a new habitation,  
Solid, substantial, of timber rough-hewn from the firs of the forest.  
Wooden-barred was the door, and the roof was covered with rushes;  
Latticed the windows were, and the window-panes were of paper,  
Oiled to admit the light, while wind and rain were excluded.  
There too he dug a well, and around it planted an orchard:  
Still may be seen to this day<sup>1</sup> some trace of the well and the orchard.  
Close to the house was the stall, where, safe and secure from annoyance,  
Raghorn, the snow-white bull, that had fallen to Alden's allotment

In the division of cattle, might ruminate in the night-time

Over the pastures he cropped, made fragrant by sweet pennyroyal.

Oft when his labor was finished, with eager fees,  
would the dreamer

Follow the pathway that ran through the woods to  
the house of Priscilla,

Led by illusions romantic and subtile deceptions of  
fancy,

Pleasure disguised as duty, and love in the sem-  
blance of friendship.

Ever of her he thought, when he fashioned the walls  
of his dwelling;

Ever of her he thought, when he delved in the soil  
of his garden;

Ever of her he thought, when he read in his Bible  
on Sunday

Praise of the virtuous woman, as she is described in  
the Proverbs,<sup>1</sup> —

How the heart of her husband doth safely trust in  
her always,

How all the days of her life she will do him good;  
and not evil,

How she seeketh the wool and the flax and worketh  
with gladness,

How she layeth her hand to the spindle and holdeth  
the distaff,  
How she is not afraid of the snow for herself or her  
household,  
Knowing her household are clothed with the scarlet  
cloth of her weaving!

So as she sat at her wheel one afternoon in the  
autumn,  
Alden, who opposite sat, and was watching her  
dexterous fingers,  
As if the thread she was spinning were that of his  
life and his fortune,  
After a pause in their talk, thus spake to the sound  
of the spindle:  
"Truly, Priscilla," he said, "when I see you spin-  
ning and spinning,  
Never idle a moment, but thrifty and thoughtful of  
others,  
Suddenly you are transformed, are visibly changed  
in a moment;  
You are no longer Priscilla, but Bertha the Beauti-  
ful Spinner."  
Here the light foot on the treadle grew swifter and  
swifter; the spindle  
Uttered an angry snarl, and the thread snapped  
short in her fingers;

While the impetuous speaker, not heeding the mischief, continued:

“ You are the beautiful Bertha, the spinner, the queen of Helvetia; <sup>1</sup>

She whose story I read at a stall in the streets of Southampton,

Who, as she rode on her palfrey, o'er valley and meadow and mountain,

Ever was spinning her thread from a distaff fixed to her saddle.

She was so thrifty and good, that her name passed into a proverb.

So shall it be with your own, when the spinning wheel shall no longer

Hum in the house of the farmer, and fill its chambers with music.

Then shall the mothers, reprobating, relate how it was in their childhood,

Praising the good old times, and the days of Priscilla the spinner!”

Straight uprose from her wheel the beautiful Puritan maiden,

Pleased with the praise of her thrift from him whose praise was the sweetest,

Drew from the reel on the table a snowy skein of her spinning,

Thus making answer, meanwhile, to the flattering  
phrases of Alden:

“Come, you must not be idle; if I am a pattern for  
housewives,

Show yourself equally worthy of being the model of  
husbands.

Hold this skein on your hands, while I wind it,  
ready for knitting;

Then who knows but hereafter, when fashions have  
changed and the manners,

Fathers may talk to their sons of the good old  
times of John Alden!”

Thus, with a jest and a laugh, the skein on his  
hands she adjusted,

He sitting awkwardly there, with his arms extended  
before him,

She standing graceful, erect, and winding the thread  
from his fingers,

Sometimes chiding a little his clumsy manner of  
holding,

Sometimes touching his hands, as she disentangled  
expertly

Twist or knot in the yarn, unawares — for how  
could she help it? —

Sending electrical thrills through every nerve in  
his body.

Lo! in the midst of this scene, a breathless messenger entered,  
Bringing in hurry and heat the terrible news from the village.  
Yes; Miles Standish was dead! — an Indian had brought them the tidings, —  
Slain by a poisoned arrow, shot down in the front of the battle,  
Into an ambush beguiled, cut off with the whole of his forces;  
All the town would be burned, and all the people be murdered!  
Such were the tidings of evil that burst on the hearts of the hearers.  
Silent and statue-like stood Priscilla, her face looking backward  
Still at the face of the speaker, her arms uplifted in horror;  
But John Alden, upstarting, as if the barb of the arrow  
Piercing the heart of his friend had struck his own, and had sundered  
Once and forever the bonds that held him bound as a captive,  
Wild with excess of sensation, the awful delight of his freedom,

Mingled with pain and regret, unconscious of what  
he was doing,  
Clasped, almost with a groan, the motionless form  
of Priscilla,  
Pressing her close to his heart, as forever his own,  
and exclaiming:  
“Those whom the Lord hath united, let no man  
put them asunder!”<sup>1</sup>

Even as rivulets twain, from distant and sep-  
arate sources,  
Seeing each other afar, as they leap from the rocks,  
and pursuing  
Each one its devious path, but drawing nearer and  
nearer,  
Rush together at last, at their trysting-place in the  
forest;  
So these lives that had run thus far in separate  
channels,  
Coming in sight of each other, then swerving and  
flowing asunder,  
Parted by barriers strong, but drawing nearer and  
nearer,  
Rushed together at last, and one was lost in the  
other.

IX

THE WEDDING-DAY

Forth from the curtain of clouds, from the tent  
of purple and scarlet,  
Issued the sun,<sup>1</sup> the great High-Priest, in his gar-  
ments resplendent,  
Holiness unto the Lord, in letters of light, on his  
forehead,  
Round the hem of his robe the golden bells and  
pomegranates.  
Blessing the world he came, and the bars of vapor  
beneath him  
Gleamed like a grate of brass, and the sea at his  
feet was a laver!

This was the wedding morn of Priscilla the Puri-  
tan maiden.  
Friends were assembled together; the Elder and  
Magistrate also  
Graced the scene with their presence, and stood  
like the Law and the Gospel,  
One with the sanction of earth and one with the  
blessing of heaven.  
Simple and brief was the wedding, as that of Ruth  
and of Boaz.<sup>2</sup>

Softly the youth and the maiden repeated the words of betrothal,  
Taking each other for husband and wife in the Magistrate's presence,  
After the Puritan way, and the laudable custom of Holland.<sup>1</sup>

Fervently then and devoutly, the excellent Elder of Plymouth  
Prayed for the hearth and the home, that were founded that day in affection,  
Speaking of life and of death, and imploring Divine benedictions.

Lo! when the service was ended, a form appeared on the threshold,  
Clad in armor of steel, a somber and sorrowful figure!

Why does the bridegroom start and stare at the strange apparition?  
Why does the bride turn pale, and hide her face on his shoulder?  
Is it a phantom of air, — a bodiless, spectral illusion?  
Is it a ghost from the grave, that has come to forbid the betrothal?  
Long had it stood there unseen, a guest uninvited, unwelcomed;

Over its clouded eyes there had passed at times an expression

Softening the gloom and revealing the warm heart hidden beneath them,

As when across the sky the driving rack<sup>1</sup> of the rain cloud

Grows for a moment thin, and betrays the sun by its brightness.

Once it had lifted its hand, and moved its lips, but was silent,

As if an iron will had mastered the fleeting intention.

But when were ended the troth and the prayer and the last benediction,

Into the room it strode, and the people beheld with amazement

Bodily there in his armor Miles Standish, the Captain of Plymouth!

Grasping the bridegroom's hand, he said with emotion, "Forgive me!

I have been angry and hurt, — too long have I cherished the feeling;

I have been cruel and hard, but now, thank God! it is ended.

Mine is the same hot blood that leaped in the veins of Hugh Standish,

Sensitive, swift to resent, but as swift in atoning for error.

Never so much as now was Miles Standish the friend of John Alden."

Thereupon answered the bridegroom: "Let all be forgotten between us,—

All save the dear old friendship, and that shall grow older and dearer!"

Then the Captain advanced, and, bowing, saluted Priscilla,

Gravely, and after the manner of old-fashioned gentry in England,

Something of camp and court, of town and of country, commingled,

Wishing her joy of her wedding, and loudly lauding her husband.

Then he said with a smile: "I should have remembered the adage,—

If you would be well served, you must serve yourself, and, moreover,

No man can gather cherries in Kent<sup>1</sup> at the season of Christmas!"

Great was the people's amazement, and greater yet their rejoicing,

Thus to behold once more the sunburnt face of their Captain,

Whom they had mourned as dead; and they gathered and crowded about him,  
Eager to see him and hear him, forgetful of bride and of bridegroom,  
Questioning, answering, laughing, and each interrupting the other,  
Till the good Captain declared, being quite over-powered and bewildered,  
He had rather by far break into an Indian encampment,  
Than come again to a wedding to which he had not been invited.

Meanwhile the bridegroom went forth and stood with the bride at the doorway, Breathing the perfumed air of that warm and beautiful morning. Touched with autumnal tints, but lonely and sad in the sunshine, Lay extended before them the land of toil and privation; There were the graves of the dead, and the barren waste of the seashore, There the familiar fields, the groves of pine, and the meadows; But to their eyes transfigured, it seemed as the Garden of Eden,

Filled with the presence of God, whose voice was  
the sound of the ocean.

Soon was their vision disturbed by the noise and  
stir of departure,  
Friends coming forth from the house, and impatient  
of longer delaying,  
Each with his plan for the day, and the work that  
was left uncompleted.

Then from a stall near at hand, amid exclamations  
of wonder,  
Alden, the thoughtful, the careful, so happy, so  
proud of Priscilla,  
Brought out his snow-white bull, obeying the hand  
of its master,  
Led by a cord that was tied to an iron ring in its  
nostrils,  
Covered with crimson cloth, and a cushion placed  
for a saddle.  
She should not walk, he said, through the dust and  
heat of the noonday;  
Nay, she should ride like a queen, not plod along  
like a peasant.  
Somewhat alarmed at first, but reassured by the  
others,  
Placing her hand on the cushion, her foot in the  
hand of her husband,

Gayly, with joyous laugh, Priscilla mounted her palfrey.

“Nothing is wanting now,” he said with a smile,  
“but the distaff;

Then you would be in truth my queen, my beautiful Bertha!”

Onward the bridal procession now moved to their new habitation,

Happy husband and wife, and friends conversing together.

Pleasantly murmured the brook, as they crossed the ford in the forest,

Pleased with the image<sup>1</sup> that passed, like a dream of love through its bosom,

Tremulous, floating in air, o'er the depths of the azure abysses.

Down through the golden leaves the sun was pouring his splendors,

Gleaming on purple grapes, that, from branches above them suspended,

Mingled their odorous breath with the balm of the pine and the fir-tree,

Wild and sweet as the clusters that grew in the valley of Eshcol.<sup>2</sup>

Like a picture it seemed of the primitive, pastoral ages,

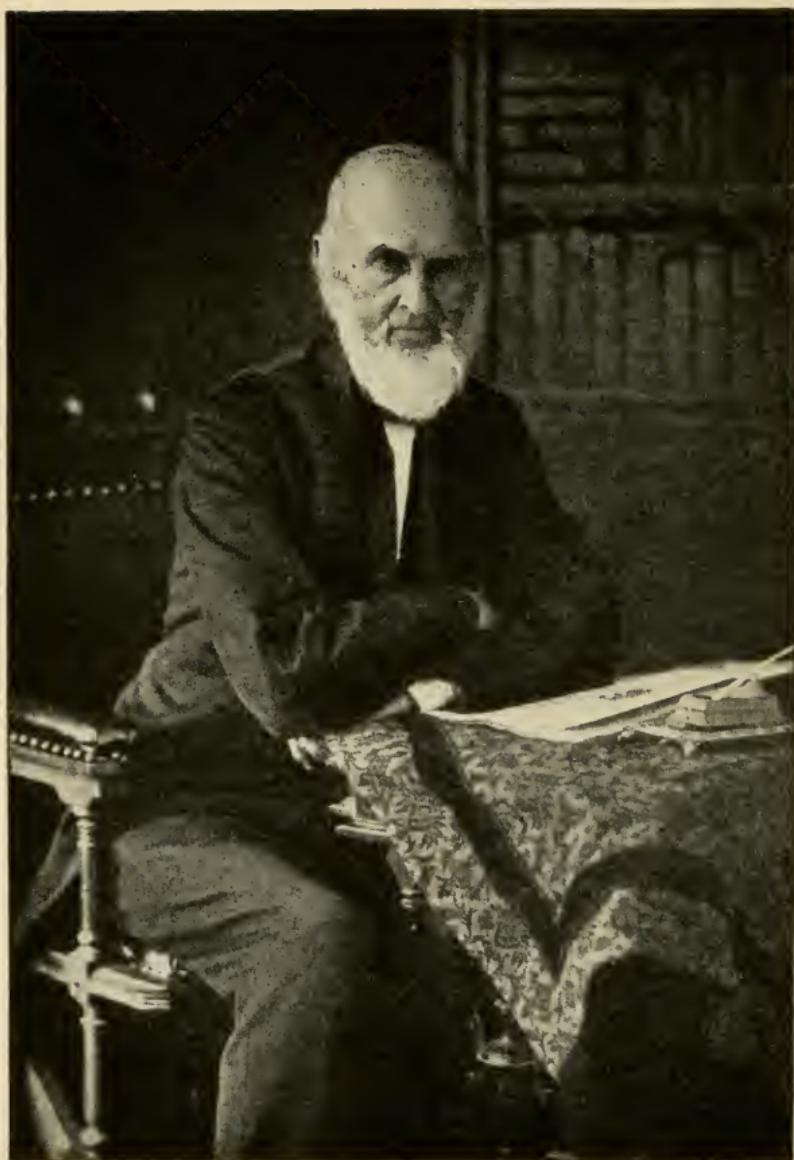
Fresh with the youth of the world, and recalling  
Rebecca and Isaac,<sup>1</sup>

Old and yet ever new,<sup>2</sup> and simple and beautiful  
always,

Love immortal and young in the endless succession  
of lovers.

So through the Plymouth woods passed onward the  
bridal procession.





JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

# JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

## SNOW-BOUND

### A WINTER IDYL<sup>1</sup>

TO THE MEMORY OF THE HOUSEHOLD IT DESCRIBES

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

“As the Spirits of Darkness be stronger in the dark, so good Spirits which be Angels of Light are augmented not only by the Divine light of the Sun, but also by our common Wood Fire: and as the Celestial Fire drives away dark spirits, so also this our Fire of Wood doth the same.” — COR. AGRIPPA, *Occult Philosophy*,<sup>2</sup> Book I. ch. v.

“Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
Arrives the snow; and, driving o'er the fields,  
Seems nowhere to alight; the whited air  
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven,  
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.  
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet  
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
Around the radiant fireplace, inclosed  
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.”

EMERSON, *The Snow-Storm*.

The sun that brief December day <sup>3</sup>  
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,  
And, darkly circled, gave at noon  
A sadder light than waning moon.  
Slow tracing down the thickening sky

Its mute and ominous prophecy,  
A portent seeming less than threat,  
It sank from sight before it set.  
A chill no coat, however stout,  
Of homespun stuff <sup>1</sup> could quite shut out,  
A hard, dull bitterness of cold,  
That checked, mid-vein, the circling race  
Of life-blood in the sharpened face,  
The coming <sup>2</sup> of the snow-storm told.  
The wind blew east; we heard the roar <sup>3</sup>  
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,  
And felt the strong pulse throbbing there  
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,—  
Brought in the wood from out of doors,  
Littered the stalls, and from the mows  
Raked down the herd's-grass for the cows:  
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;  
And, sharply clashing horn on horn,  
Impatient down the stanchion <sup>4</sup> rows  
The cattle shake their walnut bows;  
While, peering from his early perch  
Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,  
The cock his crested <sup>5</sup> helmet bent  
And down his querulous <sup>6</sup> challenge sent.

Unwarmed by any sunset light  
The gray day darkened into night,  
A night made hoary with the swarm  
And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,  
As zigzag wavering to and fro  
Crossed and recrossed the wingèd snow:  
And ere the early bedtime came  
The white drift piled the window-frame,  
And through the glass the clothes-line posts.  
Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts.<sup>1</sup>  
So all night long the storm roared on:  
The morning broke without a sun;  
In tiny spherule <sup>2</sup> traced with lines  
Of Nature's geometric signs,  
In starry flake and pellicle  
All day the hoary meteor fell;  
And, when the second morning shone,  
We looked upon a world unknown,  
On nothing we could call our own.  
Around the glistening wonder bent  
The blue walls of the firmament,  
No cloud above, no earth below,—  
A universe of sky and snow!  
The old familiar sights of ours  
Took marvelous shapes; strange domes and towers  
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,

Or garden-wall or belt of wood;  
A smooth white mound <sup>1</sup> the brush-pile showed,  
A fenceless drift what once was road;  
The bridle-post an old man sat  
With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;  
The well-curb had a Chinese roof;  
And even the long sweep, high aloof,  
In its slant splendor, seemed to tell  
Of Pisa's leaning miracle.<sup>2</sup>

A prompt, decisive man, no breath  
Our father <sup>3</sup> wasted: "Boys, a path!"  
Well pleased (for when did farmer boy  
Count such a summons less than joy?)  
Our buskins <sup>4</sup> on our feet we drew;  
With mitten hands, and caps drawn low,  
To guard our necks and ears from snow,  
We cut the solid whiteness through;  
And, where the drift was deepest, made  
A tunnel walled and overlaid  
With dazzling crystal: we had read  
Of rare Aladdin's wondrous cave,<sup>5</sup>  
And to our own his name we gave,  
With many a wish the luck were ours  
To test his lamp's supernal powers.  
We reached the barn with merry din,

And roused the prisoned brutes within.  
The old horse thrust his long head out,  
And grave with wonder gazed about;  
The cock his lusty greeting said,  
And forth his speckled harem led;  
The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,  
And mild reproach of hunger looked;  
The hornèd patriarch of the sheep,  
Like Egypt's Amun <sup>1</sup> roused from sleep,  
Shook his sage head with gesture mute,  
And emphasized with stamp of foot.

All day the gusty north-wind bore  
The loosened drift its breath before;  
Low circling round its southern zone,  
The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.  
No church-bell <sup>2</sup> lent its Christian tone  
To the savage air, no social smoke  
Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.  
A solitude <sup>3</sup> made more intense  
By dreary-voicèd elements,  
The shrieking of the mindless wind,  
The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,  
And on the glass the unmeaning beat  
Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.  
Beyond the circle of our hearth

No welcome sound of toil or mirth  
Unbound the spell, and testified  
Of human life and thought outside.  
We minded <sup>1</sup> that the sharpest ear  
The buried brooklet <sup>2</sup> could not hear,  
The music of whose liquid lip  
Had been to us companionship,  
And, in our lonely life, had grown  
To have an almost human tone.

As night drew on, and, from the crest  
Of wooded knolls <sup>3</sup> that ridged the west,  
The sun, a snow-blown traveler, sank  
From sight beneath the smothering bank,  
We piled with care our nightly stack  
Of wood against the chimney-back, —  
The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,  
And on its top the stout back-stick;  
The knotty forestick laid apart,  
And filled between with curious art  
The ragged brush; then, hovering near,  
We watched the first red blaze appear,  
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam  
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,  
Until the old, rude-furnished room  
Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom;

While radiant with a mimic flame  
Outside the sparkling drift became,  
And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree  
Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free.  
The crane and pendent trammels<sup>1</sup> showed,  
The Turk's heads on the andirons<sup>2</sup> glowed;  
While childish fancy, prompt to tell  
The meaning of the miracle,  
Whispered the old rhyme: "*Under the tree,  
When fire outdoors burns merrily,  
There the witches are making tea.*"

The moon above the eastern wood  
Shone at its full; the hill-range stood  
Transfigured in the silver flood,  
Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,  
Dead white, save where some sharp ravine  
Took shadow, or the somber green  
Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black  
Against the whiteness of their back.  
For such a world and such a night  
Most fitting that unwarming light,  
Which only seemed where'er it fell  
To make the coldness visible.

Shut in from all the world without,

We sat the clean-winged hearth <sup>1</sup> about,  
Content to let the north-wind roar  
In baffled rage at pane and door,  
While the red logs before us beat  
The frost-line <sup>2</sup> back with tropic heat;  
And ever, when a louder blast  
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,  
The merrier up its roaring draught  
The great throat of the chimney laughed;  
The house-dog on his paws outspread  
Laid to the fire his drowsy head,  
The cat's dark silhouette <sup>3</sup> on the wall  
A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;  
And, for the winter fireside meet,<sup>4</sup>  
Between the andirons' straddling feet,  
The mug of cider simmered slow,  
The apples sputtered in a row,  
And, close at hand, the basket stood  
With nuts from brown October's<sup>5</sup> wood.

What matter how the night behaved?  
What matter how the north-wind raved?  
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow  
Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.  
O Time and Change! — with hair as gray  
As was my sire's that winter day,

How strange it seems, with so much gone  
Of life and love, to still live on!  
Ah, brother! only I and thou <sup>1</sup>  
Are left of all that circle now,—  
The dear home faces whereupon  
That fitful firelight paled and shone.  
Henceforward, listen as we will,  
The voices of that hearth are still;<sup>2</sup>  
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,  
Those lighted faces smile no more.  
We tread the paths their feet have worn,  
    We sit beneath their orchard trees,  
    We hear, like them, the hum of bees  
And rustle of the bladed corn;  
We turn the pages that they read,  
    Their written words we linger o'er,  
But in the sun they cast no shade,  
No voice is heard, no sign is made,  
    No step is on the conscious floor!  
Yet Love will dream and Faith will trust  
(Since He who knows our need is just)  
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.  
Alas for him who never sees  
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!<sup>3</sup>  
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day

Across the mournful marbles <sup>1</sup> play!  
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
    The truth to flesh and sense unknown,  
That Life is ever lord of Death,  
    And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time <sup>2</sup> with stories old,  
Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,  
Or stammered from our school-book lore  
“The chief of Gambia’s <sup>3</sup> golden shore.”  
How often since, when all the land  
Was clay in Slavery’s shaping hand,<sup>4</sup>  
As if a trumpet called, I’ve heard  
Dame Mercy Warren’s rousing word:  
“*Does not the voice of reason cry,*  
    *Claim the first right which Nature gave,*  
From the red scourge of bondage fly  
    *Nor deign to live a burdened slave!*”  
Our father rode again his ride  
On Memphremagog’s<sup>5</sup> wooded side;  
Sat down again to moose and samp<sup>6</sup>  
In trapper’s hut and Indian camp;  
Lived o’er the old idyllic ease  
Beneath St. Francois’<sup>7</sup> hemlock trees;  
Again for him the moonlight shone  
On Norman cap and bodiced zone;<sup>8</sup>

Again he heard the violin play  
Which led the village dance away,  
And mingled in its merry whirl  
The grandam and the laughing girl,  
Or, nearer home, our steps he led  
Where Salisbury's level marshes<sup>1</sup> spread  
Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;  
Where merry mowers, hale and strong,  
Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along<sup>2</sup>  
The low green prairies of the sea.  
We shared the fishing off Boar's Head,<sup>3</sup>  
And round the rocky Isles of Shoals  
The hake-broil on the driftwood coals;  
The chowder on the sand-beach made,  
Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot,  
With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.  
We heard the tales of witchcraft old,  
And dream and sign and marvel told  
To sleepy listeners as they lay  
Stretched idly on the salted hay,  
Adrift along the winding shores,  
When favoring breezes deigned to blow  
The square sail of the gundalow,  
And idle lay the useless oars.  
Our mother, while she turned her wheel  
Or run the new-knit stocking heel,

Told how the Indian hordes came down  
At midnight on Cochecho town,<sup>1</sup>  
And how her own great-uncle bore  
His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.  
Recalling, in her fitting phrase,  
So rich and picturesque and free  
(The common unrhymed poetry  
Of simple life and country ways),  
The story of her early days, —  
She made us welcome <sup>2</sup> to her home;  
Old hearths grew wide to give us room;  
We stole with her a frightened look  
At the gray wizard's conjuring-book,  
The fame whereof went far and wide  
Through all the simple country-side;  
We heard the hawks at twilight play,  
The boat-horn on Piscataqua,<sup>3</sup>  
The loon's weird laughter far away;  
We fished her little trout-brook, knew  
What flowers in wood and meadow grew,  
What sunny hillsides autumn-brown  
She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,  
Saw where in sheltered cove and bay  
The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,  
And heard the wild geese calling loud  
Beneath the gray November cloud.

Then, haply, with a look more grave  
And soberer tone, some tale she gave <sup>1</sup>  
From painful Sewel's <sup>2</sup> ancient tome,  
Beloved in every Quaker home,  
Of faith fire-winged <sup>3</sup> by martyrdom,  
Or Chalkley's Journal, old and quaint,<sup>4</sup> —  
Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint! —  
Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,  
And water-butt and bread-cask failed,  
And cruel, hungry eyes pursued  
His portly presence, mad for food,  
With dark hints muttered under breath  
Of casting lots for life or death,  
Offered,<sup>5</sup> if Heaven withheld supplies,  
To be himself the sacrifice.  
Then, suddenly, as if to save  
The good man from his living grave,  
A ripple on the water grew,  
A school of porpoise flashed in view.  
“Take, eat,” he said, “and be content;  
These fishes in my stead are sent  
By Him who gave the tangled ram  
To spare the child of Abraham.”<sup>6</sup>

Our uncle,<sup>7</sup> innocent of books,  
Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,

The ancient teachers never dumb  
Of Nature's unhoused lyceum.<sup>1</sup>  
In moons and tides and weather wise,  
He read the clouds as prophecies,  
And foul or fair could well divine,  
By many an occult hint and sign,  
Holding the cunning-warded keys  
To all the woodcraft mysteries;  
Himself to Nature's heart so near  
That all her voices in his ear  
Of beast or bird had meanings clear,  
Like Apollonius<sup>2</sup> of old,  
Who knew the tales the sparrows told,  
Or Hermes,<sup>3</sup> who interpreted  
What the sage cranes of Nilus said;  
A simple, guileless, childlike man,  
Content to live where life began;  
Strong only on his native grounds,  
The little world of sights and sounds  
Whose girdle was the parish bounds,  
Whereof his fondly partial pride  
The common features magnified,  
As Surrey hills to mountains grew  
In White of Selborne's<sup>4</sup> loving view,  
He told how teal and loon he shot,  
And how the eagle's eggs he got,

The feats on pond and river done,  
The prodigies of rod and gun;  
Till, warming with the tales he told,  
Forgotten was the outside cold,  
The bitter wind unheeded blew,  
From ripening corn the pigeons flew,  
The partridge drummed i' the wood, the mink  
Went fishing down the river-brink.  
In fields with bean or clover gay,  
The woodchuck, like a hermit gray,  
Peered from the doorway of his cell;  
The muskrat plied the mason's trade,  
And tier by tier his mud-walls laid;  
And from the shagbark overhead  
The grizzled squirrel dropped his shell.

Next, the dear aunt,<sup>1</sup> whose smile of cheer  
And voice in dreams I see and hear, —  
The sweetest woman ever Fate  
Ferverse denied a household mate,  
Who, lonely, homeless, not the less  
Found peace in love's unselfishness,  
And welcome whereso'er she went,  
A calm and gracious element,  
Whose presence seemed the sweet income  
And womanly atmosphere of home, —

Called up her girlhood memories,  
The huskings and the apple-bees,  
The sleigh-rides and the summer sails,  
Weaving through all the poor details  
And homespun warp of circumstance <sup>1</sup>  
A golden woof-thread of romance.  
For well she kept her genial mood  
And simple faith of maidenhood;  
Before her still a cloud-land lay,  
The mirage loomed across her way;  
The morning dew, that dried so soon  
With others, glistened at her noon;  
Through years of toil and soil and care,  
From glossy tress to thin gray hair,  
All unprofaned she held apart  
The virgin fancies of the heart.  
Be shame to him of woman born  
Who had for such but <sup>2</sup> thought of scorn.

There, too, our elder sister plied  
Her evening task the stand beside; <sup>3</sup>  
A full, rich nature, free to trust,  
Truthful and almost sternly just,  
Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,  
And make her generous thought a fact,  
Keeping with many a light disguise

The secret of self-sacrifice.  
O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best  
That Heaven itself could give thee, — rest,  
Rest from all bitter thoughts and things!

How many a poor one's blessing went  
With thee beneath the low green tent  
Whose curtain never <sup>1</sup> outward swings!

As one who held herself a part  
Of all she saw, and let her heart  
Against the household bosom lean,  
Upon the motley-braided <sup>2</sup> mat  
Our youngest and our dearest sat,  
Lifting her large, sweet, asking eyes,  
Now bathed within the fadeless green  
And holy peace of Paradise.  
Oh, looking from some heavenly hill,  
Or from the shade of saintly palms,  
Or silver reach of river calms,  
Do those large eyes behold me still?  
With me one little year ago: <sup>3</sup> —  
The chill weight of the winter snow  
For months upon her grave has lain;  
And now, when summer south-winds blow  
And brier and harebell bloom again,  
I tread the pleasant paths we trod,

I see the violet-sprinkled sod,  
Whereon she leaned, too frail and weak  
The hillside flowers she loved to seek,  
Yet following me where'er I went  
With dark eyes full of love's content.  
The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills

The air with sweetness; all the hills  
Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;  
But still I wait with ear and eye  
For something gone which should be nigh,  
A loss in all familiar things,<sup>1</sup>  
In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.  
And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,

Am I not richer than of old?  
Safe in thy immortality,  
What change can reach the wealth I hold?

What chance can mar the pearl and gold  
Thy love hath left in trust with me?  
And while in life's late afternoon,

Where cool and long the shadows grow,  
I walk to meet the night that soon  
Shall shape and shadow overflow,  
I cannot feel that thou art far,  
Since near at need the angels are;  
And when the sunset gates unbar,  
Shall I not see thee waiting stand,

And, white against the evening star,  
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?

Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,  
The master of the district school <sup>1</sup>  
Held at the fire his favored place;  
Its warm glow lit a laughing face  
Fresh-hued and fair, where scarce appeared  
The uncertain prophecy of beard.  
He teased the mitten-blinded cat,  
Played cross-pins on my uncle's hat,  
Sang songs, and told us what befalls  
In classic Dartmouth's college halls.  
Born the wild Northern hills among,  
From whence his yeoman father wrung  
By patient toil subsistence scant,  
Not competence and yet not want,  
He early gained the power to pay  
His cheerful, self-reliant way;  
Could doff at ease his scholar's gown  
To peddle wares from town to town;  
Or through the long vacation's reach  
In lonely lowland districts teach,  
Where all the droll experience <sup>2</sup> found  
At stranger hearths in boarding round,  
The moonlit skater's keen delight,

The sleigh-drive through the frosty night,  
The rustic party,<sup>1</sup> with its rough  
Accompaniment of blind-man's-buff,  
And whirling plate, and forfeits paid,  
His winter task a pastime made.

Happy the snow-locked homes wherein  
He tuned his merry violin,  
Or played the athlete in the barn,  
Or held the good dame's winding yarn,  
Or mirth-provoking versions told  
Of classic legends rare and old,  
Wherein the scenes of Greece and Rome  
Had all the commonplace of home,  
And little seemed at best the odds  
'Twixt Yankee peddlers and old gods;  
Where Pindus-born Arachthus <sup>2</sup> took  
The guise of any grist-mill brook,  
And dread Olympus <sup>3</sup> at his will  
Became a huckleberry hill.

A careless boy that night he seemed;  
But at his desk he had the look  
And air of one who wisely schemed,  
And hostage from the future took  
In trainèd thought and lore of book.

Large-brained, clear-eyed, — of such as he  
Shall Freedom's young apostles be

Who, following in War's bloody trail,  
Shall every lingering wrong assail;  
All chains from limb and spirit strike,  
Uplift the black and white alike;  
Scatter before their swift advance  
The darkness and the ignorance,  
The pride, the lust, the squalid sloth,  
Which nurtured Treason's monstrous growth,  
Made murder pastime, and the hell  
Of prison-torture possible;  
The cruel lie of caste refute,  
Old forms remold; and substitute  
For Slavery's lash the freeman's will,  
For blind routine, wise-handed skill;  
A school-house plant <sup>1</sup> on every hill,  
Stretching in radiate nerve-lines thence  
The quick wires of intelligence;  
Till North and South together brought  
Shall own the same electric thought,  
In peace a common flag salute,  
And, side by side in labor's free  
And unresentful rivalry,  
Harvest the fields wherein they fought.

Another guest <sup>2</sup> that winter night  
Flashed back from lustrous eyes the light.

Unmarked by time, and yet not young,  
The honeyed music of her tongue  
And words of meekness scarcely told  
A nature passionate and bold,  
Strong, self-concentered, spurning guide,  
Its milder features dwarfed beside  
Her unbent will's majestic pride.  
She sat among us, at the best,  
A not unfear'd, half-welcome guest,  
Rebuking with her cultured phrase  
Our homeliness of words and ways.  
A certain pard-like, treacherous grace  
Swayed the lithe limbs and dropped the lash,  
Lent the white teeth their dazzling flash;  
And under low brows, black with night,  
Rayed out at times a dangerous light;  
The sharp heat-lightnings<sup>1</sup> of her face  
Presaging ill to him whom Fate  
Condemned to share her love or hate.  
A woman tropical, intense  
In thought and act, in soul and sense,  
She blended in a like degree  
The vixen and the devotee,  
Revealing with each freak of feint  
The temper of Petruchio's Kate,<sup>2</sup>  
The raptures of Siena's saint.<sup>3</sup>

Her tapering hand and rounded wrist  
Had facile power to form a fist;  
The warm, dark languish of her eyes  
Were never safe from wrath's surprise.  
Brows saintly calm and lips devout  
Knew every change of scowl and pout;  
And the sweet voice had notes more high  
And shrill for social battle-cry.  
Since then what old cathedral town  
Has missed her pilgrim staff and gown,  
What convent-gate has held its lock  
Against the challenge of her knock!  
Through Smyrna's plague-hushed thoroughfares,  
Up sea-set Malta's rocky stairs,  
Gray olive slopes of hills that hem  
Thy tombs and shrines, Jerusalem,  
Or startling on her desert throne  
The crazy Queen of Lebanon <sup>1</sup>  
With claims fantastic as her own,  
Her tireless feet have held their way;  
And still, unrestful, bowed, and gray,  
She watches under Eastern skies,  
With hope each day renewed and fresh,  
The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,  
Whereof she dreams and prophesies!  
Where'er her troubled path may be,

The Lord's sweet pity with her go!  
The outward wayward life we see,  
The hidden springs we may not know.  
Nor is it given us to discern  
What threads the fatal sisters spun,  
Through what ancestral years has run  
The sorrow with the woman born,  
What forged her cruel chain of moods,  
What set her feet in solitudes,  
And held the love within her mute,  
What mingled madness in the blood,  
A lifelong discord and annoy,  
Water of tears with oil of joy,  
And hid within the folded bud  
Perversities of flower and fruit.  
It is not ours to separate  
The tangled skein of will and fate,  
To show what metes and bounds should stand  
Upon the soul's debatable land,  
And between choice and Providence  
Divide the circle of events;  
But He who knows our frame is just,<sup>1</sup>  
Merciful and compassionate,  
And full of sweet assurances  
And hope for all the language is,  
That He remembereth we are dust!

At last <sup>1</sup> the great logs, crumbling low,  
Sent out a dull and duller glow,  
The bull's-eye watch that hung in view,  
Ticking its weary circuit through,  
Pointed with mutely-warning sign  
Its black hand to the hour of nine.  
That sign the pleasant circle broke:  
My uncle ceased his pipe to smoke,  
Knocked from its bowl the refuse gray,  
And laid it tenderly away,  
Then roused himself to safely cover  
The dull red brand with ashes over.  
And while, with care, our mother laid  
The work aside, her steps she stayed  
One moment, seeking to express  
Her grateful sense of happiness  
For food and shelter, warmth and health,  
And love's contentment more than wealth,  
With simple wishes (not the weak,  
Vain prayers which no fulfillment seek,  
But such as warm the generous heart,  
O'er-prompt to do with Heaven its part)  
That none might lack, that bitter night,  
For bread and clothing, warmth and light.  
Within our beds awhile we heard  
The wind that round the gables roared,

With now and then a ruder shock,  
Which made our very bedsteads rock.  
We heard the loosened clapboards tost,  
The board-nails snapping in the frost;  
And on us, through the unplastered wall,  
Felt the light sifted snow-flakes fall;  
But sleep stole on, as sleep will do  
When hearts are light and life is new;  
Faint and more faint the murmurs grew,  
Till in the summer-land of dreams  
They softened to the sound of streams,  
Low stir of leaves, and dip of oars,  
And lapsing waves on quiet shores.

Next morn we wakened with the shout  
    Of merry voices high and clear;  
And saw the teamsters drawing near  
To break the drifted highways out.  
Down the long hillside treading slow  
We saw the half-buried oxen go,  
Shaking the snow from heads uptost,  
Their straining nostrils white with frost.  
Before our door the straggling train  
Drew up, an added team to gain.  
The elders threshed their hands a-cold,  
    Passed, with the cider-mug, their jokes

From lip to lip; the younger folks  
Down the loose snow-banks, wrestling, rolled,  
Then toiled again the cavalcade  
O'er windy hill, through clogged ravine,  
And woodland paths that wound between  
Low drooping pine-boughs winter-weighed.  
From every barn a team afoot,  
At every house a new recruit,  
Where, drawn by Nature's subtlest law,  
Haply the watchful young men saw  
Sweet doorway pictures of the curls  
And curious eyes of merry girls,  
Lifting their hands in mock defense  
Against the snow-ball's compliments,  
And reading in each missive tost<sup>1</sup>  
The charm which Eden never lost.

We heard once more the sleigh-bells' sound;  
And, following where the teamsters led,  
The wise old Doctor went his round,  
Just pausing at our door to say,  
In the brief autocratic way  
Of one who, prompt at Duty's call,  
Was free to urge her claim on all,  
That some poor neighbor sick abed  
At night our mother's aid would need.

For, one in generous thought and deed,  
What mattered in the sufferer's sight  
The Quaker matron's inward light,<sup>1</sup>  
The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed?<sup>2</sup>  
All hearts confess the saints elect  
Who, twain in faith, in love agree,  
And melt not in an acid sect<sup>3</sup>  
The Christian pearl of charity!

So days went on: a week had passed  
Since the great world was heard from last.  
The Almanac we studied o'er,  
Read and reread our little store  
Of books and pamphlets, scarce a score;<sup>4</sup>  
One harmless novel, mostly hid  
From younger eyes, a book forbid,  
And poetry, (or good or bad,  
A single book was all we had,) +  
Where Ellwood's meek, drab-skirted Muse,  
A stranger to the heathen Nine,<sup>5</sup>  
Sang, with a somewhat nasal whine,  
The wars of David and the Jews.  
At last the floundering carrier bore  
The village paper<sup>6</sup> to our door.  
Lo! broadening outward as we read,  
To warmer zones the horizon spread;

In panoramic length unrolled  
We saw the marvel that it told.  
Before us passed the painted Greeks,  
    And daft McGregor on his raids  
    In Costa Rica's everglades.  
And up Taygetus winding slow  
Rode Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks,  
A Turk's head at each saddle bow!  
Welcome to us its week-old news,  
Its corner for the rustic Muse,  
    Its monthly gauge of snow and rain,  
Its record, mingling in a breath  
The wedding bell and dirge of death;  
Jest, anecdote, and love-lorn tale,  
The latest culprit sent to jail;  
Its hue and cry of stolen and lost,  
Its vendue sales and goods at cost,  
    And traffic calling loud for gain.  
We felt the stir of hall and street,  
The pulse of life that round us beat;  
The chill embargo of the snow  
Was melted in the genial glow;  
Wide swung again our ice-locked door,  
And all the world was ours once more!

Clasp, Angel, of the backward look

And folded wings of ashen gray  
And voice of echoes far away,  
The brazen covers of thy book;  
The weird palimpsest old and vast,  
Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past;  
Where, closely mingling, pale and glow  
The characters of joy and woe;  
The monographs of outlived years,  
Or smile-illumed or dim with tears,  
    Green hills of life that slope to death,  
And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees  
Shade off to mournful cypresses  
    With the white amaranths underneath.  
Even while I look, I can but heed  
    The restless sands' incessant fall,  
Importunate hours that hours succeed,  
Each clamorous with its own sharp need,  
    And duty keeping pace with all.  
Shut down and clasp the heavy lids;  
I hear again the voice that bids  
The dreamer leave his dream midway  
For larger hopes and graver fears:  
Life greatens in these later years,  
The century's aloe flowers to-day!

**Yet**, haply in some lull of life,

Some Truce of God <sup>1</sup> which breaks its strife,  
The worldling's eyes shall gather dew,

    Dreaming in throngful city ways  
Of winter joys his boyhood knew;  
And dear and early friends — the few  
Who yet remain — shall pause to view

    These Flemish pictures of old days;  
Sit with me by the homestead hearth,  
And stretch the hands of memory forth  
    To warm them at the wood-fire's blaze?

And thanks untraced <sup>2</sup> to lips unknown  
Shall greet me like the odors blown  
From unseen meadows newly mown,  
Or lilies floating in some pond,  
Wood-fringed, the wayside gaze beyond;  
The traveler owns the grateful sense  
Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,  
And, pausing, takes with forehead bare  
The benediction of the air.



## NOTES

### *THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL*

**Verse Form.** You know that there are patterns or designs for rugs and wall papers and fancy work. So it is with poetry. Some recent poetry has a design or pattern that is hard to recognize, but poems such as most of Longfellow's and Whittier's and Lowell's are made in designs that are easily to be traced. Sometimes there are four accents or beats to a line in a poetry pattern; sometimes five. Sometimes there are mixtures in the same poem. In *The Vision of Sir Launfal* there are more lines with four accents than any other kind, as

“The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice.”

You could hardly read this line aloud without noticing that you accented the “but” in *buttercup*, the “catch” in *catches*, the word *sun*, and the “chal” in *chalice*—four accents. Find ten other lines that go like this.

The rhyme—that is, the correspondence or agreement in sound in the last syllables of lines—shows much variety in *Sir Launfal*. Take the first eight lines. You see that *organist* rhymes with *list*, *away* with *lay*, *instrument* with *sent*, *theme* with *dream*. Lowell did not tie himself down to making perfect rhymes. On page 30 *wood* and *blood*, which look as though they might rhyme, really don't; nor is *chalice* on page 31 a very good rhyme with *palace* two lines below; nor *poor* with *door* on page 36. However, when Lowell sets out to make a rhyme, he usually succeeds, and there is some pleasure in noticing the effect of rhyme in poetry. It gives a kind of flavor or finish that prose does not have.

**Lowell's Note on the Setting of the Poem.** “According to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy

Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus Christ partook of the Last Supper with His disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; but, one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favorite enterprise of the Knights of Arthur's Court to go in search of it. Sir Galahad was at last successful in finding it, as may be read in the seventeenth book of the *Romance of King Arthur*. Tennyson has made Sir Galahad the subject of one of the most exquisite of his poems.

“The plot (if I may give that name to anything so slight) of the following poem is my own, and, to serve its purposes, I have enlarged the circle of competition in search of the miraculous cup in such a manner as to include not only other persons than the heroes of the Round Table, but also a period of time subsequent to the date of King Arthur's reign.”

**Ways of Enjoying the Poem.** There are two different ways of enjoying the poem. One is to read it through and enjoy the vivid descriptions and the story without worrying about things that are beyond your comprehension. There is a good deal to be said in favor of this way of reading such a beautiful poem—beautiful in language and in sentiment—as is *The Vision of Sir Launfal*. The other way, a more common kind of enjoyment for boys and girls just in their teens, is to skim the poem through and make a list of strange words that are hiding the full meaning of the poem. These are then looked up in a dictionary or in the editor's notes. My own boy of ten prefers to ask questions like, “Father, what does *auroral* mean?”—making me a dictionary. Your family may be dictionaries for you. When you know the words, you can read the poem to get all the images and ideas there are in it.

Some boys and girls would rather read the poem of *Sir Launfal* without taking the trouble to understand it thoroughly; but some will get much more pleasure from it by knowing fully what it means.

As you read the poem, see if you know what the following words and expressions in the Prelude to Part First mean:

atilt	doth	lavish	sap
auroral	dross	lay (noun)	shrives
barren	drowsy	list	Sinais
benedicite	druid	maize	sprouted
booth	dumb	mean	strives
bubbles	ebbed	might (noun)	tasking
cap and bells	fee	murmur	taxed
chalice	fervor	musing	theme
chanticleer	flush (noun)	nice	thrilling (verb)
clod	flushes	palace	towers (verb)
couriers	groping	plot	traitor
craters	heifer	prophecies	tries
cringe	high-tide	rare	utter
deluge	illumined	ripply	vista

**29, 1. Musing organist.** I have often heard a pianist play a few uncertain chords before starting to play a well-known musical composition. Once I heard the great organist Guilmant do just what Lowell pictures in the opening lines of the poem. Guilmant's first wavering uncertain notes were like the darkness which brilliantly turns into dawn, as the theme of the improvisation developed itself. Before beginning the story of the poem, Lowell tunes up, as it were, by giving a picture of the outdoor world at its first flush of spring-time joy. This makes a good introduction to the picturing of the hero of the poem in the first flush of youthful enthusiasm, the springtime of life.

**2. Our infancy.** Wordsworth in his poem "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" speaks of heaven as lying about us in our infancy.

3. **Sinais.** Just as Moses got close to God on Mt. Sinai, so we can get close to God, Lowell says, not only as children but as grown people, if we will appreciate the beauty and free gift of his wondrous outdoor natural world — the skies, the winds, the woods, the sea, the June day.

4. **Druid wood.** The reference is to the Druids, priests in early days in Britain. They worshiped among oak trees. So the poet thinks of a great far-stretching tree as holding out its boughs as if in the act of bestowing a blessing.

**30, 1. A cap and bells.** The sign of a court fool or jester. We give our lives for foolish things, says the poet, whereas without giving anything we can have God's gift of June.

**31, 1. Meadows green.** It is often a trick of poets to put an adjective after a noun like this. One of Lowell's early favorites, Milton, often does this in his shorter poems.

**2. Nice.** This is a perfect use of the word.

**32, 1. Couriers.** One of the pleasures in reading the poem is to see the poet's art in bringing into his descriptions impressions not of sight only but of smell and touch or hearing. By impressions from these various senses we have the announcement made to us that spring is here.

**33, 1. Craters.** Another of the pleasures in reading the poem is in observing the attractive and sometimes curious comparisons. Anger and trouble, the poet says, make ugly holes in our lives. Spring covers these up, just as snow may cover up the crater of an 'old volcano.

**2. Richest mail.** The Metropolitan Museum in New York has specimens of richly polished and ornamented armor worn by knights hundreds of years ago. The polished metal was often inlaid with patterns of gold and jewels. See also *gilded mail*.

**3. Rushes.** In humility before beginning his search, the knight lay down on the rushes, the covering of the floor of his castle.

**34, 1. North Countree.** Perhaps in England. See Lowell's note on the setting (p. 162).

**2. Pavilions.** The tall trees which tried to overcome the cold bareness of the castle which they surrounded. They are referred to also as tents.

**3. Charger.** A spirited horse, a war-horse. The poem combines word pictures of older days of chivalry with sentiments about the equality of men that are peculiar to modern times.

**4. Maiden knight.** A knight who had not yet done knightly deeds — young, untried, unharmed.

**5. Three hundred summers.** A poetical way of telling the age of the castle.

**35, 1. Locust leaf.** Do the small delicate leaflets on a locust tree seem always lightly quivering? Note the device for poetic beauty in the line—all the *l*'s.

**2. Made morn.** In his bright armor, Sir Launfal in his vision shone like the morning light in the midst of the darkness of the gloomy castle.

**3. 'Ware.** Another of the pleasures in the reading of the poem is the discovery of the numerous quaint, old-fashioned words such as these: 'ware, 'neath, 'gan, ere, doth, sate, lightsome, darksome, swound. Old ballads have many such expressions. **Leper:** leprosy is a contagious disease which used to be greatly feared. It is under control now and cases are rare, although there are a few lepers in the United States at present.

**37, 1. Five thousand summers old.** This is much more interesting than *very old* or *immorially old*, or some such term.

**2. All the cold.** Just as a description of June set the tone for the vision of the knight starting out, so the description of December sets the tone for the knight's sorrowful return in his vision after his apparently fruitless search for the Grail. Lowell made his description of the brook from an actual winter scene that deeply impressed him one night.

**38, 1. Ice-fern leaf.** The delicate tracery of the ice on the brook looked like ferns.

2. **Mortal builder's.** An allusion to a great ice palace built by a Russian empress.

3. **Cheeks of Christmas.** How could they grow red?

4. **Corbel.** How would Lowell know the architectural words of the poem?

5. **Flame-pennons droop.** A person who likes to look at an open fire in a fireplace would do well to memorize these 14 lines beginning with "Within the hall."

40, 1. **The cross.** Knights in the Crusades wore the sign of the cross.

41, 1. **Rain-blanchéd bone.** Classes always ask me what this means. Have you ever seen a bone that has been long lying out in the yard exposed to rain and all kinds of weather — made white and marrowless?

43, 1. **The Beautiful Gate.** "The gate of the temple which is called Beautiful" (*Acts 3:2*), where Peter healed the lame man.

#### THE COURTSHIP OF MILES STANDISH

47, 1. **In the Old Colony days:** Beginning with a fairly definite time reference, followed by a definite place reference and the mention of a historical person, Longfellow suggests at once the atmosphere of his poem, and puts the reader in the frame of mind to follow the narrative of events in the life of Captain Miles Standish of Plymouth Colony. The poem, being narrative, is thus seen at the start to belong to the general class called epic, to which belong such poems as Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and "Evangeline" and Scott's "Lady of the Lake". Compare note 37, 2.

2. **Cordovan:** In the Spanish town of Cordova the manufacture of goatskin leather was an important industry.

3. **Miles Standish:** The Plymouth captain is not necessarily the hero, even though the poem takes his name for its title. Yet, if by *hero* is meant the central male character of a story, *i. e.*, the character around whom the action of the narrative centers, surely Standish is the hero of this poem,

for his proxy courtship is the basis for the story and his actions give structure to the poem.

As a matter of history, Captain Standish was thirty-six years old when the Mayflower reached Plymouth, but the poet, using history for the purpose of literary art, makes the Puritan captain seem older than thirty-six. Near the site of Standish's house at Duxbury, near Plymouth (in Massachusetts), there has been erected a monument 110 feet high, surmounted by a statue.

The historical basis for the poem can be easily understood from the following extract from Anderson's *Grammar School History of the United States*:

“The first permanent settlement of New England was by a small band of Pilgrims, dissenters from the Church of England, who had fled from their own country to find an asylum from religious persecution. They were known in England as Puritans.

“They at first went to Amsterdam, in Holland, whence they removed to Leyden. At Leyden they lived eleven years in great harmony, under the pastoral care of John Robinson; but, from various causes, they became dissatisfied with their residence, and desired to plant a colony in America, where they might enjoy their civic and religious rights without molestation.

“As many as could be accommodated embarked on board a vessel called the Speedwell. The ship sailed to Southampton, England, where she was joined by another ship called the Mayflower, with other Pilgrims from London. The two vessels set sail, but had not gone far before the Speedwell was found to need repairs, and they entered the port of Dartmouth, England. A second time they started, but again put back — this time to Plymouth, where the Speedwell was abandoned as unseaworthy.

“The Mayflower finally sailed alone, with about one hundred passengers, the most distinguished of whom were John Carver, William Brewster, Miles Standish, William Bradford,

and Edward Winslow. After a boisterous passage they reached Cape Cod Bay; and there, in the cabin of the Mayflower, they signed a compact for their government, and unanimously elected Carver Governor for one year.

"Several days were spent in searching for a favorable locality. At length, on the 21st of December, 1620, they landed at a place which they called Plymouth, in memory of the hospitalities which had been bestowed upon them at the last English port from which they had sailed. The winter was severe, and in less than five months nearly half of that Pilgrim band died from the effects of exposure and privations, Carver and his wife being among the number. Bradford was thereupon elected Governor, and he continued during thirty years to be a prominent man in the Colony."

**48.** 1. **Sword of Damascus:** Since the poem deals with real and fictitious incidents of nearly three hundred years ago, it is natural that there should be in the descriptions a number of unfamiliar terms. Standish's weapons and armor need explanation: the *cutlass* was a short, curved sword; the *corselet*, a breastplate of armor; *sword of Damascus*, a sword made of the fine steel for which the Syrian city of Damascus was famous — such swords were often inscribed with a sentence from the Koran; *fowling-piece*, a light gun for shooting birds; *musket*, a war gun which was in colonial times fired by means of a slow-match of twisted rope, but which is now fired by a spring lock; *matchlock*, originally the lock of a musket, but later the gun itself. Some of the other peculiar words found in the poem will be defined, but many will be left for the ingenuity and the patience of the student to master in an unabridged dictionary like Webster's International, the Century, the Standard, or, so far as completed, the invaluable *New English Dictionary*, probably the best dictionary ever made in any language.

2. **Curved at the:** There has been much adverse criticism of Longfellow's meter, as being monotonous in its easy swing. Yet it is really this easy motion that makes the poem so

fascinating as it is to persons just learning the pleasures of poetry. The lines have six accents, the number of unaccented syllables varying. In general the feet, except for the sixth, are dactylic; the sixth is trochaic. Yet the variations from dactylic in the first five feet are sufficiently numerous to prevent the poem from being monotonously regular. The ninth line is an example of the normal meter — five dactylic feet followed by one trochaic, six accents in all; but this is the first entirely normal line in the poem, for in each of the first eight lines there are some substitutions for dactylic feet, usually trochaic feet.

3. **John Alden**: Twenty-one years old when the colony was founded.

49, 1: **Not Angles**: The Angles were one of the Germanic tribes that emigrated from the Continent to England; they gave their name to England. English historians are fond of telling the story to which Longfellow alludes. It is entertainingly told in the following extract from Merrill's *English History*:

“ It was in the year 597 that the first missionaries to the Saxons landed in Britain. They were sent by Pope Gregory the Great. Before he became Pope his pity had been moved by the sight of some Saxon children, sold for slaves in the market-place of Rome. ‘ Who are these beautiful boys? ’ asked Gregory; ‘ and are they Christian children? ’ ‘ No, ’ said the slave-merchant; ‘ they are Angles, and come from a heathen land. ’ Gregory was grieved and answered, ‘ If they were Christians, they would be angels, not Angles’ (*Non Angli, sed Angeli*). ”

2. **scribe**: Frequently Longfellow employs a curiously involved word order which obscures the syntax of his sentence. In cases of doubt about his meaning, put the sentence into natural prose word order, and the difficulty will vanish; as for instance, here: Suddenly breaking the silence, Miles Standish, the Captain of Plymouth, interrupting the diligent scribe, spoke in the pride of his heart. By this

change, it becomes apparent instantly that "scribe" is the object of the participle "interrupting." It would be a pity to spend much time on the grammar of this poem except in such cases as the above, where the solution of the grammatical puzzle at once clears up the meaning.

3. **Flanders:** The Netherlands. Compare the adjective *Flemish*, pages 49 and 159.

4. **Arcabucero:** Spanish word for archer, here meaning musketeer. By scanning the line, you can readily determine the pronunciation of the difficult word.

50, 1. "Truly the breath," etc.: Compare *Psalms* xxxiii, 6 and 20.

2. **Serve yourself:** By Standish's first few speeches the poet conveys a distinct idea of the kind of man the captain was. Vivid characterization is a leading merit of the poem. The early introduction of the famous short, wise saying or adage of Captain Standish produces a humorous effect when the reader comes to what follows. This frolicsome humor shown in the poem is another of its merits, for truly the Pilgrim life was not all gloom.

3. **Rest:** A support for the gun when being fired.

51, 1. **Laughed:** Why did he laugh?

2. **Preacher:** The figure of speech by which the poet speaks of a howitzer, or small cannon, as a preacher is called metaphor. What other implied comparisons do you notice in the poem?

3. **Sagamore:** What is the effect of the introduction of the Indian words and names? A *sagamore* was a leader of one of the subdivisions of a tribe; a *sachem*, the chief of a tribe; a *pow-wow*, a medicine-man or conjuror. *Aspinet*, *Samoset*, etc., were real names mentioned in early chronicles of Plymouth.

4. **Forest:** Syntax?

52, 1. **Three:** The condensation of poetry has already been mentioned, 38, 3. How do you explain the construction of "three"?

**53, 1. Barriffe's Artillery Guide:** Colonel William Barriffe, a Puritan soldier, wrote a book entitled *Militarie Discipline; or, The Young Artillery Man.*

**2. Commentaries of Caesar:** Not knowing Latin, the captain read in a translation by an English scholar the commentaries written by Julius Cæsar on his wars with the Gauls. The account of the battle alluded to is in Section 10 of the second book of Cæsar's commentaries.

**3. Thumb-marks thick:** Alliteration.

**54, 1. Homeward bound:** The time when the chief events of the poem happened is exactly fixed by this historical reference. The Mayflower sailed homeward April 5, 1621.

**55, 1. 'Better be first,' etc.:** This is a fact of history, as can be verified by referring to Plutarch's life of Cæsar. *Iberian* means Spanish.

**56, 1. Nothing was heard, etc.:** Is the repetition of this line a blemish?

**57, 1. Priscilla:** Can you imagine to whom Alden was writing the letters, and what he said in them about Priscilla? Note the poet's method of introducing the name of the heroine of the poem by intimating that Alden is in love with her.

**58, 1. The Scriptures:** See *Genesis* ii, 18.

**2. Alone in the world:** "Mr. Molines, and his wife, his son and his servant, dyed the first winter. Only his daughter Priscilla survived and married with John Alden, who are both living and have 11 children." (Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*.)

**59, 1. Taciturn:** Reserved, silent. Used in its original sense as derived from the Latin.

**60, 1. Just as a timepiece:** So many comparisons occur in the poem that before the end the effect is tiresome. The poet seems to strain after comparisons. What others do you discover?

**2. Maxim:** Observe on pages 50 and 124 a word equivalent to "maxim."

**62, 1. So the strong will prevailed.** Compare page 61.

2. **Hanging gardens**: An allusion to the hanging gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the world. Does Longfellow's nature description seem to have the real spirit of the woods, or does it seem written from the library?

• 63, 1. **Followed the flying feet**: Is this a hint that Alden loved Priscilla before the Pilgrims left England?

2. **Astaroth . . . Baal**: Ashtoreth was goddess of love, and Baal the chief god in the Phoenician worship referred to in *Judges* ii, 13, 1 *Samuel* xii, 10, and *1 Kings* xi, 1-5. Note Alden's Puritanical repression of his own natural emotions.

64, 1. **Children**: Metaphor. The poet speaks of the may-flowers as children lost in the woods.

65, 1. **Carded wool**: In the process of spinning, the wool was first picked clear of specks and burs. Then it was carded, that is, combed out into straight lengths, the card being something like the currycomb used in cleaning horses. After being carded, the wool was pure white.

2. **Old Puritan anthem**: In the picture of colonial life the poet has introduced here a most characteristic touch. The Psalms, strong and rugged in words and music, were what the Pilgrims liked in their meeting-houses and in their home singing. That stirring exhortation to praise the Lord, viz., the hundredth Psalm, with music going back to the time of Luther, the German reformer, was a favorite song as translated by Henry Ainsworth. Persecuted in England, Ainsworth in 1590 fled to Holland. Many of his commentaries and translations were "Imprinted at Amsterdam."

66, 1. **Life**: Syntax?

2. **Hand to the plow**: *Luke* ix, 62.

3. **Mercy endureth forever**: *Jeremiah* xxxiii, 11.

72, 1. **Hugh Standish**: Compare page 123. A paragraph from Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrims* throws light on Longfellow's allusion to the ancestry of Miles Standish: "There are at this time in England two ancient families of the name, one of Standish Hall, and the other of Duxbury Park, both in Lancashire, who trace their descent from a common

ancestor, Ralph de Standish, living in 1221. There seems always to have been a military spirit in the family. Froissart, relating in his *Chronicles* the memorable meeting between Richard II and Wat Tyler, says that after the rebel was struck from his horse by William Walworth, 'then a squyer of the kynges alyted, called John Standysshe, and he drewe out his sworde, and put into Wat Tyler's belye, and so he dyed.' For this act Standish was knighted. In 1415 another Sir John Standish fought at the battle of Agincourt. From his giving the name of Duxbury to the town where he settled, near Plymouth, and calling his eldest son Alexander (a common name in the Standish family) I have no doubt that Miles was a scion from this ancient and warlike stock."

2. **Family arms:** Longfellow's description of the Standish family arms is difficult, for the words used in heraldry are strange. The coat of arms consisted of crest, shield, and motto. The *crest* was the ornament worn above the shield on the helmet. In the Standish coat of arms the crest was a cock *argent*, *i.e.*, silver in color except for the *comb*, which was the fleshly tuft growing on the cock's head, and the *wattle*, which was the fleshly wrinkled excrescence growing under the throat of the cock. Both comb and wattle were *gules*, that is, red. The rest of the *blazon*, or coat of arms, is not given.

73, 1. "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" This question has been so often quoted that it has become a part of the language and is often used by persons who when they employ it have no consciousness of its source in this poem.

74, 1. **John Alden:** The first character in this part is John Alden. See the similar opening of Parts II, III, and VI. Because of this putting of Alden to the front and letting him win the hand of Priscilla, some critics call him the hero of the poem.

2. **Apocalyptic splendors:** That is, glories described by St. John in the Book of Revelation. See especially *Revelation* xxi, 10, 11, and 15.

**75, 1. Dulse:** A kind of sea-weed. Other words having the flavor of old New England days are: "merestead" and "glebe," page 113.

**2. David's transgression:** See 2 *Samuel* xi and xii.

**77, 1. Walls of its waters:** See the story of the escape of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, *Exodus* xiii and xiv, especially the twenty-first and twenty-second verses of the fourteenth chapter.

**2. Her:** Syntax?

**78, 1. Seven houses:** What other details do you notice descriptive of Plymouth? Try to form as distinct a picture as possible.

**2. Hainault or Brabant:** Counties of the Netherlands.

**79, 1. Sped:** That is, prospered, succeeded.

**80, 1. Wat Tyler:** See note 72, 1. Observe how Standish in his anger contemptuously compares Alden with the traitor Wat Tyler.

**2. You, too, Brutus:** For this allusion consult Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*. What have you observed thus far regarding the nature and range of Longfellow's allusions?

**81, 1. Alden was left alone:** The sentence length is here skilfully varied. Be observant of such variations.

**2. Father who seeth in secret:** *Matthew* vi, 4.

**82, 1. The hill:** Metaphor. Elder Brewster is spoken of as a snow-covered hill near to heaven. Brewster was the ruling elder of the Plymouth church and preached when John Robinson, the teaching elder or pastor, was absent.

**2. The chronicles old:** In this case the old chronicle containing the sentence about the sifting of three kingdoms is an election sermon of 1668 by Stoughton.

**3. The skin:** Actually the incident occurred in 1622, when Canonicus, a chief of the Narragansett tribe, sent an Indian named Tisquantum to Governor Bradford with a rattlesnake skin filled with arrows. The latter returned it filled with powder and bullets.

**83, 1.** Voice of the Elder: John Robinson. The incident is historical.

**85, 1.** A stir and a sound: The first forty lines of Part V are a general description of the actions of the Plymouth people on the morning of the sailing of the Mayflower; the particular courtship story is resumed on page 88.

2. Mighty men of King David: 2 *Samuel* xxiii, 8.

**86, 1.** Serried: Are you interested in Longfellow's vivid, specific words?

**87, 1.** Beautiful were his feet: Adapted from the seventh verse of Chapter lii of *Isaiah*.

**88, 1.** In the desert: Compare page 103.

**90, 1.** Spake: Archaic for spoke. What is the purpose in the use of archaic words in the poem?

**2.** Stephen and Richard and Gilbert: Their last names were Hopkins, Warren, and Winslow.

**3.** Plymouth Rock: Consult note on the fourth line of the poem. At the present time in Plymouth a fragment of this flat granite rock is enclosed by a railing and protected by a canopy; the rock itself is covered by a wharf.

**4.** Master: Captain.

**91, 1.** Gunwale: Are you interested in this and in the other technical nautical words — "thwarts" and "keel," page 91; "windlass," "yards," and "braced," page 94?

**92, 1.** "Here I remain": Do you call this the climax of the poem?

**94, 1.** Set his hand: See note 66, 2.

**2.** The Gurnet: Gurnet's Nose is a headland at the entrance of Plymouth harbor.

**3.** Field of the First Encounter: The poet's appropriation of phrases from old chronicles is well illustrated here. A scouting party of Pilgrims landed from the Mayflower ahead of the rest. In Bradford and Winslow's journal quoted in Young's *Chronicles* there is mention of an engagement between this scouting party and a band of Indians: "So after we had given God thanks for our deliverance, we took our

shallop and went on our journey, and called this place The First Encounter."

95, 1. Took courage: *Acts xxviii, 15.*

96, 1. Spirit of God: *Genesis i, 2:* "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." How do you account for Longfellow's making so many quotations from the Bible?

99, 1. "No!" In reading Part VI aloud, boys and girls seem hugely to enjoy making this "No" very emphatic.

100, 1. Like the beautiful rivers: Adapted from *Genesis ii, 10.*

104, 1. Direful wrath: Compare Homer's *Iliad*, line 1:

Sing, O muse, the direful wrath of Achilles.

2. Manner was changed: In writing on the character of Priscilla, include mention of her fascinating changes in manner.

3. Holy Land: An allusion to the journeyings of the Crusaders to the sepulchre of the Saviour.

107, 1. Friendship was, etc.: An interesting sentence, in which emphasis is gained by the word order.

2. Goliath . . . Og: 1 *Samuel xvii, 4*, and *Deuteronomy iii, 11.*

3. Wampum: Beads made by North American Indians from colored shells.

108, 1. Wattawamat: "Among the rest Wituwamat bragged of the excellency of his knife. On the end of the handle there was pictured a woman's face: 'but,' said he, 'I have another at home wherewith I have killed both French and English, and that hath a man's face on it, and by and by these two must marry.' Further he said of that knife he there had, *Hinnaim namen, hinnaim michen, matta cuts*; that is to say, By and by it should see, and by and by it should eat, but not speak. Also Pecksuot, being a man of greater stature than the captain, told him, though he were a

great captain, yet he was but a little man; and, said he, 'though I be no sachem, yet I am a man of great strength and courage.' " (Winslow's *Relation of Standish's Expedition*.)

110, 1. **The boaster**: That is, Pecksuot.

111, 1. **Out of the lightning thunder**: Light travels faster than sound.

2. **Hobomok**: " Hobbamock stood by all this time as a spectator, and meddled not, observing how our men demeaned themselves in this action. All being here ended, smiling, he brake forth into these speeches to the Captain: 'Yesterday Pecksuot, bragging of his own strength and stature, said, though you were a great captain, yet you were but a little man; but to-day I see that you are big enough to lay him on the ground.' " (Winslow's *Relation*.) The poet has shortened the time; in the poem no day intervenes between the insult and the blow.

113, 1. **The ships . . . came**: This is another definite historical reference dating the time when the imaginary incidents of the poem are supposed to have occurred and helping to determine the amount of time elapsing in the narrative. The ships, Anne and Little James, arrived at Plymouth in August, 1623.

2. **Waxing valiant in fight**: *Hebrews xi, 34.*

114, 1. **To this day**: The descendants of John Alden still own the land where his house stood in Duxbury, on the Massachusetts coast, thirty-eight miles southeast of Boston. On the old homestead site the Alden descendants gather from many parts of the country each year for a family reunion.

115, 1. **In the Proverbs**: See the portion of the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs descriptive of the virtuous woman.

117, 1. **Bertha . . . Helvetia**: Bertha, the housewifely queen of a Burgundian king whose territory included Helvetia (Switzerland), is represented on monuments as seated on her throne in the act of spinning.

120, 1. **Put them asunder**: Adapted from the Biblical

sentence, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," found in *Matthew* xix, 6, and *Mark* x, 9.

**121, 1. The sun:** Compare the description of the sun, page 87. See also the description of the high priest in the Bible — *Exodus* xxviii, 34-36.

**2. That of Ruth and of Boaz:** *Ruth* iv, 11 and 12.

**122, 1. Laudable custom of Holland:** Longfellow quotes the phrase from Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*: "May 12 was the first marriage in this place, which, according to the *laudable custome of the Low-Countries*, in which they had lived, was thought most requisite to be performed by the magistrate, as being a civil thing, upon which many questions aboute inheritances doe depende, with other things most proper to their cognizans, and most consonante to the scripturs, *Ruth* iv, and no wher found in the gospell to be layed on the ministers as a part of their office."

**123, 1. Rack:** Vapor.

**124, 1. Kent:** A county in the southern part of England.

**127, 1. Pleased with the image:** What other instances have you found where the poet has attributed the emotions of men to inanimate objects?

**2. Valley of Eshcol:** *Numbers* xiii, 23.

**128, 1. Rebecca and Isaac:** *Genesis* xxiv, 64.

**2. Old and yet ever new:** The simple themes drawn from the universal experiences of men are the ones that in literature are the most popular. That is one reason why Longfellow's "Courtship of Miles Standish" has been so widely read. It is a true picture of colonial days in New England, but more than this it is a narrative of human experiences that seem true to nature no matter whether the Puritan life is understood by the reader or not.

## SNOW-BOUND

**129, 1. A Winter Idyl:** In form, Whittier's poem, like Poe's and unlike Longfellow's, is personal. It aims not to tell a particular story, but to give a picture of the life of Whittier's family during a winter storm. In presenting this specific picture, the poet has been so true to family life that for two generations men everywhere who have been familiar with rustic scenes and people have exclaimed on the reality of Whittier's description. Aiming to describe just what he knew himself, his own household, he has succeeded in making a description that seems universal. Yet he has chosen to depict his characters in action rather than at rest. Since the family was kept indoors by the snow, it seems natural that the idyl should cover several days, as it does; the main action covers three days with the two intervening nights, but the whole time mentioned is a week. Over four hundred of the seven hundred and fifty-nine lines of the poem are, however, devoted to the characterization of the family gathered about the "clean-winged hearth," one evening. It is an ideal picturing of the life of an old-fashioned country home. This poem, then, called by Whittier a winter idyl and often referred to as a pastoral poem, may be considered lyric in character.

The versification is simple. Most of the lines are regular iambic tetrameter, rhyming in couplets. Occasionally the lines begin with a trochaic instead of with an iambic foot, and there are infrequent substitutions for iambic feet in other parts of a line, as on page 141, where the second foot of the twelfth line is a spondee. Occasionally, too, three lines in succession, as on page 133, rhyme; or there is a line which jumps over a couplet to rhyme with the line that follows the couplet, for instance, *drew, low, snow, and through*, on page 132. The student will discover for himself a few other irregularities in the rhyme scheme. There has been adverse criticism of the nature of the rhymes. The ears of critics are offended by such harsh rhymes as *on* and *sun*, page 131;

*breath* and *path*, page 132; *mute* and *foot*, page 133. But in both meter and rhyme the poem is for the most part simple and pleasing.

2. **Occult philosophy:** What is the use of introducing the poem by such a quotation as this?

3. **That brief December day:** From this time reference are you misled into thinking that the poem will be a story?

130, 1. **Homespun stuff:** Compare page 139. The poet explains in a brief autobiographical letter, written in 1882, that his mother, in addition to her ordinary house duties, kept busy spinning and weaving the linen and woolen cloth needed in the family.

2. **Coming:** As in "The Raven" and "The Courtship," when a sentence seems difficult to understand it is well to try turning the words into an ordinary prose order; for example, *told the coming of the snow-storm*. Try this with any sentences that puzzle you at your first reading. After thus re-phrasing the sentences, you will be ready to express an opinion concerning the simplicity or the complexity, the clearness or the obscurity, of Whittier's sentences. You will know whether to call Whittier a smooth, cultured writer or an unpolished, homespun poet.

3. **Heard the roar:** The Whittier home, a short walk from Haverhill on the road to Salisbury, in the northeastern corner of Massachusetts, was within sound of the sea.

4. **Stanchion:** The description of the barn is wonderfully vivid. It strikes so many chords of memory that no matter how many times the person who has seen such places reads the description he thrills with enjoyment of the memories. Are you familiar with all the words used in the description?

5. **Crested:** Compare note 72, 2.

6. **Querulous:** Poets often assign to inanimate objects or to the lower animals the emotions and thoughts of men. Here Whittier has used subjective description in saying that the cock sent a *querulous* challenge. Is the same true of "lusty greeting," on page 133?

**131, 1. Like . . . ghosts:** Likening the clothes-line posts to ghosts, Whittier has used a simile, while Poe in line 8 of "The Raven," likening the ember to a ghost, used a metaphor. What difference do you notice between simile and metaphor? Some of Whittier's figures of speech, like some of Longfellow's notable sentences, have become a part of the popular language and are used familiarly without consciousness of their origin.

**2. Spherule:** If you were describing a snow-storm, would you use such words as "spherule," "geometric," "pellicle," and "meteor"? Since Whittier had little schooling, are you not surprised that he knew such words? How do you suppose he learned them, and what do they mean?

**132, 1. Mound:** Attribute complement of "showed." What difference did the snow make in the appearance of familiar objects near the house?

**2. Pisa's leaning miracle:** Seven miles from the mouth of the river Arno in Italy, is the city of Pisa, best known the world over for its strange leaning tower built in 1350. The tower, 179 feet high, is 24 feet off the perpendicular; the cause of the leaning was perhaps an earthquake during the building of the tower, but Prof. W. H. Goodyear of Brooklyn declares that it was built originally as it now stands.

**3. Our father:** The brisk characterization of the father in this poem and the appreciative characterizations of the other members of the household show the absurdity of such sweeping condemnation of Whittier as this by one critic: "His characters, where he introduces such, are commonly abstractions with little of the flesh and blood of real life in them." In "Snow-Bound," at least, Whittier has presented real persons, not abstractions.

**4. Buskins:** Foot-coverings extending half-way to the knee. Several hundred years before Whittier's time, the word buskin was used to describe the high-heeled, thick-soled shoes worn by tragic actors.

**5. Aladdin's wondrous cave:** Old and young, school-boys and learned scholars, enjoy the tales of the Arabian nights.

The one referred to by Whittier tells about the wonderful lamp of Aladdin.

**133, 1. Amun:** Ammon, an Egyptian god often represented as a ram.

**2. Church-bell:** In his autobiographical letter, Whittier says that the sound of the two church-bells of Haverhill could be heard in the lonely homestead on Sundays.

**3. Solitude:** Syntax?

**134, 1. Minded:** Regarded with attention, noticed, observed.

**2. Buried brooklet:** In his prose works Whittier often refers to the little brook that ran near the farmhouse. Here is one of his descriptions: "Our old homestead nestled under a long range of hills which stretched off to the west. It was surrounded by woods in all directions save to the southeast where a break in the leafy wall revealed a vista of low green meadows, picturesque with wooded islands and jutting capes of upland. Through these a small brook, noisy enough as it foamed, rippled, and laughed down its rocky falls by our garden-side, wound, silently and scarcely visible, to a still larger stream, known as the Country Brook. This brook in its turn, after doing duty at two or three saw and grist mills, the clack of which we could hear in still days across the intervening woodlands, found its way to the great river [the Merrimac], and the river took up and bore it down to the great sea [the Atlantic Ocean]." (From "The Fish I Didn't Catch.")

**3. Wooded knolls:** See note **134, 2.**

**135, 1. Crane . . . trammels:** The "crane" was the horizontal arm to which hooks called "trammels" were attached for holding kettles or other vessels over the fire in the open fireplace.

**2. Andirons:** Iron horizontal supports on which the sticks or logs rested. "Andirons" were often wrought out into fantastic shapes, such as heads of Turks.

**136, 1. Clean-winged hearth:** Though familiar to grandfathers of Yankee origin, such expressions as this are entirely

outside the experience of young people of to-day and consequently need explanation. In olden days the wing of a fowl, usually a turkey wing, was placed beside the hearth for brushing back the ashes and keeping the hearth clean.

2. **Frost-line**: Have you ever seen how the fire even in a coal-stove will gradually dissipate the frost on a window-pane?

3. **Silhouette**: In the description of the scene around the hearth, what bookish words and what homely, colloquial words does the poet use? The difficulties of Whittier's vocabulary are caused by the use either of somewhat bookish words or of homely words descriptive of a life fast fading away. It is interesting to collect examples of both kinds of Whittier's words.

4. **Meet**: Suitable. What does this adjective modify?

5. **Brown October's**: A phrase reminiscent of the old ballads of which Whittier was fond.

**137, 1. Thou**: Whittier was a Quaker. See page 21.

2. **Voices of that hearth are still**: Compare note **146, 1**. This tone of memory, this expression of long-gathered emotions, this personal element, makes the poem clearly lyric rather than epic.

3. **Cypress-trees**: Symbols of mourning. The lines might be paraphrased thus: That person is to be pitied who in his mourning cannot see hope beyond in heaven.

**138, 1. Marbles**: Marble monuments in a cemetery.

2. **Sped the time**: Pages 138-153 give the stories told around the fire.

3. "The chief of Gambia's," etc. This line is from a poem by Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton, which appeared in Caleb Bingham's *The American Preceptor*, a popular school-book of the time.

4. **Slavery's shaping hand**: Compare page 149. Regarding Whittier's part in the anti-slavery movement, see page 22. A few years after the publication of "Snow-Bound," the poet edited the journal of John Woolman, a Quaker who before

the Revolutionary War wrote quaintly but eloquently against slavery. The italicized lines which Whittier says were like a trumpet call are from a poem by Mrs. Mercy Warren, wife of a Revolutionary patriot of Massachusetts.

5. **Memphremagog**: This lake, the name of which means "beautiful water," lies one-fifth in Vermont and four-fifths in Canada. It is described by Baedeker as enclosed by rocky shores and wooded hills.

6. **Samp**: Coarse hominy. A word like this helps to reproduce the atmosphere of the curious stories of travel told by the father.

7. **St. Francois'**: Lake St. Francis is an expansion of the St. Lawrence River. At the bottom of page 138 and the top of page 139 are given the father's memories of his Canadian horseback journey, when he camped with trappers and Indians and enjoyed the life in the French-Canadian villages.

8. **Norman cap and bodiced zone**: Descriptions of the head-gear and dresses of the French-Canadian dancers.

139, 1. **Salisbury's level marshes**: The salt marshes of Salisbury are over the New Hampshire line, but are, like the Isles of Shoals where the father fished, near the Massachusetts farm of the Whittiers.

2. **Swept, scythe, etc.**: An alliterative line.

3. **Boar's Head**: A bluff on the New Hampshire coast, not far from the Whittier farm. The *Isles of Shoals* (see page 25) are nine rocky islands off Boar's Head, frequented as summer resorts because of their pure sea-air and freedom from mosquitoes.

140, 1. **Cocheco town**: The city of Dover, New Hampshire, settled in 1623, lies on the Cocheco River.

2. **She made us welcome**: That is, she told the hearth-side group all about her early home. What lines give the mother's contribution to the talk? What idea do you form in your mind of the appearance and characteristics of the mother?

3. **Piscataqua**: A New Hampshire river.

**141.** 1. **Some tale she gave:** Compare the nature of the tales told by the mother with those told by the father.

2. **Sewel's ancient tome:** William Sewel was a Dutch Quaker whose *History of the Quakers* was translated into English and several times reprinted.

3. **Faith fire-winged:** In the early days of the Quaker faith in England and the colonies, large numbers of its adherents were burned to death or hanged.

4. **Chalkley's Journal, old and quaint:** Thomas Chalkley was a Quaker preacher who was born in 1675. The greater part of his life he spent in traveling about New England and the southern colonies preaching. The quaint character of his *Journal*, published in his seventy-second year, is evident in the following extract: "To stop their murmuring, I told them they should not need to cast lots, which was usual in such cases, which of us should die first, for I would freely offer up my life to do them good. One said, 'God bless you! I will not eat any of you.' Another said he would die before he would eat any of me, and so said several. I can truly say, on that occasion, at that time, my life was not dear to me, and that I was serious and ingenuous in my proposition; and as I was leaning over the side of the vessel, thoughtfully considering my proposal to the company, and looking in my mind to Him that made me, a very large dolphin came up towards the top or surface of the water and looked me in the face; and I called the people to put a hook into the sea and take him, for here is one come to redeem me (I said to them). And they put a hook into the sea, and the fish readily took it, and they caught him. He was longer than myself. I think he was about six feet long, and the largest that ever I saw. This plainly showed us that we ought not to distrust the providence of the Almighty. The people were quieted by this act of Providence, and murmured no more. We caught enough to eat plentifully of till we got into the capes of Delaware."

5. **Offered:** The subject is "Who," six lines above.

- 6. **Child of Abraham:** Consult *Genesis* xxii, 13.
- 7. **Our uncle:** How do the tales told by the uncle differ from those told by the mother and father?

**142, 1. Lyceum:** Characteristic of the era in New England was the lyceum, a building or an association for the teaching of the people by public lectures. Many persons who had scanty opportunities for schooling were able to acquire a fair education by attendance at the lyceum and by reading. Whittier himself thus gained much. In his later years he became an enthusiastic patron of the Amesbury Lyceum; there such men as Beecher and Phillips lectured at his invitation. In recognition of his attainments he received, the year of the publication of "Snow-Bound," the Harvard honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, and three years later, in 1869, was made a trustee of Brown University.

**2. Apollonius:** Apollonius of Tyana was regarded as a worker of miracles. He lived in the time of Christ.

**3. Hermes:** Compare Milton's lyric, "Il Penseroso." Hermes Trismegistus was an Egyptian philosopher who lived in Alexandria early in the Christian era. He is said to have invented the art of writing in hieroglyphics.

**4. White of Selborne:** Gilbert White, author of *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, is said by the poet to have magnified the Surrey hills of southern England just as the simple, guileless uncle magnified the common features of his immediate neighborhood in northeastern Massachusetts.

**143, 1. The dear aunt:** The verb for this subject is found in the first line of page 144. What was the character of the aunt? How do you picture her personal appearance? Miss Hussey had the reputation of making the best squash pies that were ever baked.

**144, 1. Warp of circumstance:** In "Snow-Bound," Whittier himself weaves through the warp of circumstantial details of his home life something of the woof-thread of poetical romance. The details do not seem merely petty

and commonplace, but through the spirit of the writer become invested with poetic sentiment and charm. In the history of literature, Whittier belongs to the great world-movement spoken of on page 27, his first model being a leader in that movement, Robert Burns. Whittier's particular part in the movement, as exemplified in his "Snow-Bound," is that of the accurate, sensible observer of rustic life. In contrast to Longfellow, who is the cultured library poet, Whittier stands for specifickness and accuracy of homely observation. Whittier's minuteness of detail is admirably suggested by his own phrase on page 159 when he speaks of his poem as containing "Flemish pictures of old days." The Flemish artists were distinguished by their attention to minute detail. In the particular phase of literature known as American, Whittier is one of the chief writers of the group of New England poets who, about the time of the publication of his first poem, entered upon a long period of literary supremacy in America.

2. **But:** Part of speech?

3. **Beside:** What other examples do you notice of prepositions following their objects?

**145, 1. Never outward swings:** It is a beautiful, pathetic figure of speech by which the poet thus refers to the death of his elder sister.

**2. Motley-braided:** Braided in many colors, like the old-fashioned rag carpets still to be seen in some country districts. Note that Whittier uses few hyphenated adjectives, in contrast to Tennyson, for instance, in his *Idylls of the King*.

**3. One little year ago:** Whittier's younger sister died in 1864, the year before he wrote the poem.

**146, 1. A loss in all familiar things:** In his biography of Whittier, George R. Carpenter refers to the memory mood in which the poem was written: "It was an old man, tender-hearted, who thus drew the portraits of the circle of which he and his brother alone survived. The mood was one of wistful and reverential piety — the thoughtful farmer's

mood, in many a land, under many a religion, recalling the ancient scenes more clearly as his memory for recent things grows less secure, living with fond regret the departed days, yearning for friends long vanished. Our changed national life, the passing away of the old agricultural conditions, the breaking up of ancient traditions, has made this wistful and reverential mood a constant element in our recent literature. In poems and novels we have delighted to reconstruct the past, as the Arab-singers before Mohammed began their lays with the contemplation of a deserted camping-ground. It was Whittier that introduced the new theme, best described in the closing lines of his own poem."

**147, 1. Master of the district school:** Compare Goldsmith's village schoolmaster in "The Deserted Village." It is said that William Haskell, the schoolmaster of Whittier's poem, never knew that he had been described in the poem.

**2. Experience:** One of the subjects of the verb "made," on page 148.

**148, 1. Rustic party:** Are the three games mentioned still played at parties?

**2. Pindus-born Arachthus:** The Arachthus is one of five rivers which rise in Pindus, the great mountain-chain of Greece.

**3. Olympus:** The Grecian mountain on the top of which the gods were said to dwell. Like Charles Lamb, also lacking college education, Whittier is even fonder of classical allusions than the college trained Longfellow.

**149, 1. Plant:** This is one of the verbs in the series beginning "shall . . . assail," whose subject is "Who."

**2. Another guest:** Harriet, daughter of Judge Livermore, of New Hampshire, a woman of great abilities and peculiarities. She was once an independent missionary to the western Indians, whom she believed to be the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. At another time she went about proclaiming the second coming of Christ (see page 151). Her travels are not exaggerated by the poet.

**150, 1. Heat-lightnings:** A bold metaphor.  
**2. Petruchio's Kate:** In *The Taming of the Shrew* by Shakespeare.

**3. Siena's saint:** St. Catherine.

**151, 1. Crazy Queen of Lebanon:** Lady Hester Stanhope, daughter of the third Earl Stanhope. She was the most trusted confidante of her uncle, William Pitt; on his death she received a royal pension of £1200 a year. Becoming disgusted with society life, she retired for a while into Wales, and in 1810 left England to wander about until her death in 1829 among the half savage people of Mount Lebanon. Harriet Livermore lived with her for a time until the two quarreled "in regard to two white horses with red marks on their backs which suggested the idea of saddles," on which Lady Stanhope expected to ride into Jerusalem with the Lord.

**152, 1. But He, etc.:** The meaning is as follows: But He who understands our physical limitations is just, merciful, and compassionate; and the words, He remembers we are dust, are full of sweet assurances and hope for all of us.

**153, 1. At last:** Note the transition phrase. Having gathered the family around the hearth and given us their stories and pictures, the poet breaks up his family circle with the dying of the fire, that evening.

**156, 1. Quaker matron's inward light:** The Quakers believed that within themselves there burned a light from God which should guide each one independently in his daily acts.

**2. Calvin's creed:** Born in 1509, John Calvin spent most of his life in Geneva, Switzerland, preaching certain specific religious doctrines which came to be called Calvinism: 1. Particular Election; 2. Particular Redemption; 3. Moral inability in a fallen state; 4. Irresistible grace; 5. Final perseverance. The Puritans were rigid Calvinists, stern and austere in their beliefs, but stirred by an intensely ideal, imaginative faith.

**3. Acid sect:** See page 24 for light on Whittier's breadth of sympathy.

4. **Scarce a score:** Probably no American poet had **fewer** books in boyhood than Whittier. At home he had access to a few miscellaneous volumes, mostly sermons, tracts, biographies, or journals of famous Quakers. He and his sister read at night by candles one of the Waverley novels. The book of poetry referred to four lines below was an epic poem, *Davideis*, by the Quaker poet, Thomas Elwood, a friend of John Milton's. In his autobiographical letter Whittier says that as a boy he was a close student of the Bible.

5. **The heathen Nine:** The nine muses.

6. **Village paper:** Whittier's description of the general contents of the village paper of his boyhood needs explanation with regard to several points. The "painted Greeks" referred to on page 157 were the Creek Indians at that time being removed from Georgia and driven beyond the Mississippi. "Daft McGregor" was Sir Gregor McGregor who was attempting to found a colony in Costa Rica. "Taygetus" was a mountain of Greece. "Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks" were inhabitants of the mountainous district of Maina, in the Greek province of Laconia. The Mainotes, pronounced mi-nōts, were a wild, brave people who, under the leadership of Ypsilanti, were prominent in the long war for freedom from the Turks. "Vendue sales," page 157, were sales at auction, still common in the central part of New York state under the name "vandoo." The point of the whole description is in the fifth from the last line on page 157, where the word "embargo" means restraint, and where it is suggested that the village newspaper broke the bounds of the snow and let the thoughts of the household move out across the world.

The interest that Whittier had in the local paper after he was nineteen was often greatly increased by his seeing his poems in print. It is said that the first newspaper containing a poem of his was thrown to him in the field where he was working with his uncle.

**159, 1. Truce of God:** An allusion to a formal cessation of baronial petty warfare in the middle ages. The church

forbade any baron to attack another between sunset on Wednesday and sunrise on the following Monday. The point of the allusion is that the poet hopes that the worldly man's eyes in some reminiscent moment when he has broken loose from the struggle of life shall grow wet with tears as he thinks of his boyhood winter joys.

2. **Thanks untraced:** The last twenty lines of "Snow-Bound" beautifully convey the poet's idea of the mission and the reception of his poem.



## EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

### I. THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

1. What is a vision? What is a knight?
2. What did the knight, Sir Launfal, see in his vision?
3. What does the poem contain in addition to the vision itself?
4. What customs of the days of chivalry are referred to in the poem? Where else have you read about the doings of knights?
5. What was the Holy Grail? How did Sir Launfal in his vision find the Grail?
6. Suppose your class is going to have an entertainment at Christmas. Suppose each pupil is going to write or print a Christmas card. Write a stanza to be used on the card that you contribute. Probably a sentiment suggested by Lowell's poem might make a good basis for your verse-making; for instance, the spirit of giving, good cheer to rich and poor, thankful hearts, humility, nature's gifts, the Christmas fireside.
7. What lines from Lowell's poem would be appropriate for use on a Christmas card?
8. Suppose that a bronze tablet in honor of James Russell Lowell is to be erected in a Hall of Fame. What inscription would be good for such a tablet? What might a speaker say at the time when the tablet is unveiled?
9. Discuss: June and December—a contrast and a comparison.
10. What does your family do when a tramp comes to the door asking for food?
11. In what respects would it be impossible to carry out

the idea of democracy given in the last four lines of *The Vision of Sir Launfal*?

## II. THE COURTSHIP OF MILES STANDISH

1. In a common history of the United States or in an encyclopedia, read the account of Massachusetts colonial life, and compare it with Longfellow's poem, in contents and form.
2. Condense the entire poem into a single narrative paragraph of about one hundred and fifty words, using as topic sentence a statement of the theme of the poem.
3. As an exercise in the evaluation of words, add to your paragraph or subtract from it so as to make it precisely one hundred and fifty words long.
4. From what you have read of Longfellow's life and works, do you think he might have made a successful novel out of the material contained in this poem, if he had tried? Give reasons for your answer.
5. The courtship in some novel that you have read contrasted with that related in the poem.
6. A courtship as disclosed in a package of old letters or in a dozen souvenir postal cards.
7. (a.) Character studies in the poem.  
(b.) Do Miles Standish, John Alden, and Priscilla seem like real persons?
8. Describe the house in which Standish lived. Supplement by your imagination the details of the poem.
9. Describe the Captain.
10. After reading Part I aloud, would you prefer to read the rest of the story in poetry or in prose? Reasons.
11. The picture that is in your mind of the scene between Alden and Priscilla in Part III.
12. Could you keep your face straight while you were reading of the proposal? Why or why not?
13. Do the girls like this part of the poem best?

14. Do the boys prefer Part IV to Part III?
15. Are you more interested in the descriptions or in the exciting passages? Why?
16. Do you enjoy reading aloud any part of the poem?
17. Describe Alden's new habitation.
18. Would you omit any of the lines of the poem?  
If so, which?
19. Describe the wedding procession.
20. Write nine sentences each containing in your own words the substance of one of the parts of the poem.
21. Imaginary account of the courtship of Miles Standish and Rose.
22. Indian stories that you know.
23. Narratives of several battles.
24. Accounts of pioneer life.
25. A wedding.
26. What makes Longfellow's poem more interesting than Poe's?
27. The place of "The Courtship of Miles Standish" in the history of literature.

### III. SNOW-BOUND

1. Early nineteenth century farm life of New England.
2. What do your grandparents say about the truthfulness of the picture given in Whittier's winter idyl?
3. The meaning of *idyl*.
4. Even though you have never lived on a farm, can you appreciate and enjoy Whittier's poem?
5. If you have lived on a farm, are you prepared to say that the poem seems true to life?
6. The family described in "Snow-Bound."
7. Nine pictures of real persons.
8. Description of the storm, of the barn, of the house, and of the scenes outside the house.

9. Description of a snow-storm that has kept you from school.
10. Experiences sliding down straw-stacks, led down from beams in the barn into the haymow, trying to milk cows or do other farm chores.
11. Description of a fine new hip-roofed barn.
12. A lonely farmhouse in winter.
13. Summer scenes on a farm that you have visited.
14. Winter and summer in the city.
15. Explain how to build a furnace fire, or how to cut kindling, or how to keep from being run over.
16. The relative advantages of city and country life.
17. Chores of a city boy.
18. Life in a city apartment or flat contrasted with the boyhood life of Whittier.
19. State in a few words the theme of "Snow-Bound," and then in one paragraph write a well-proportioned summary of the entire poem.
20. Whittier's life as a reformer and poet.
21. Whom do you admire the most, — Poe, Longfellow, or Whittier? Why?
22. On comparing Whittier's "Snow-Bound" with Emerson's "Snow-Storm," what difference do you observe in the metrical form and in the contents?
23. Using your imagination to fill out the details, picture as vividly as you can, with gestures if they will help, the full picture that is in your mind of the persons gathered around the hearth in the evening. Do not tell any of the conversation, simply describe the scene at some moment.
24. The fireside conversation.
25. Name six American and six English political and literary contemporaries of Whittier.
26. The characteristics of the literary era to which Whittier belonged. (See page 27.)
27. Do you like "Snow-Bound" better than either "The Raven" or "The Courtship of Miles Standish"? Reasons.











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